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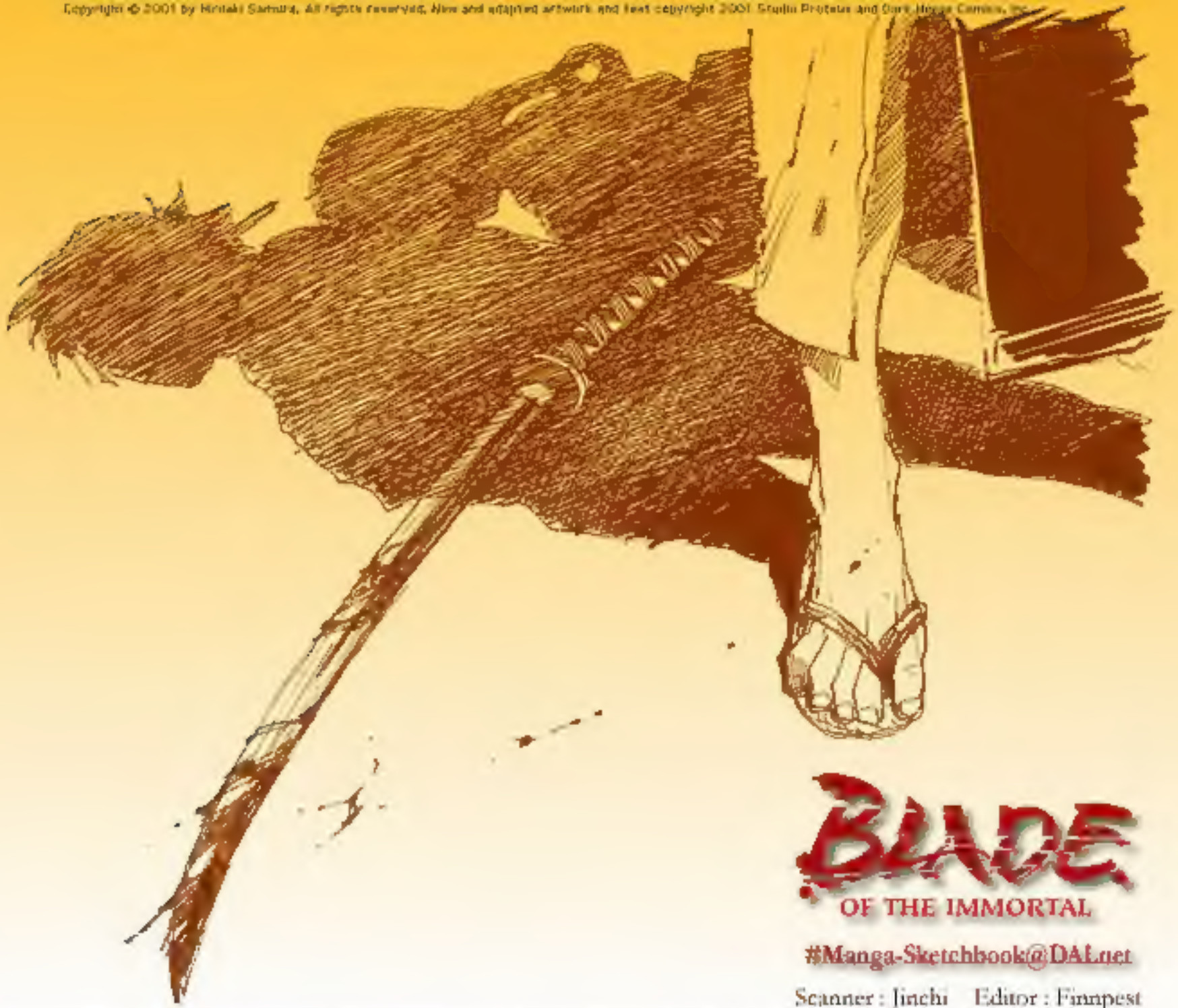

# BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

#Manga-Sketchbook@DALnet

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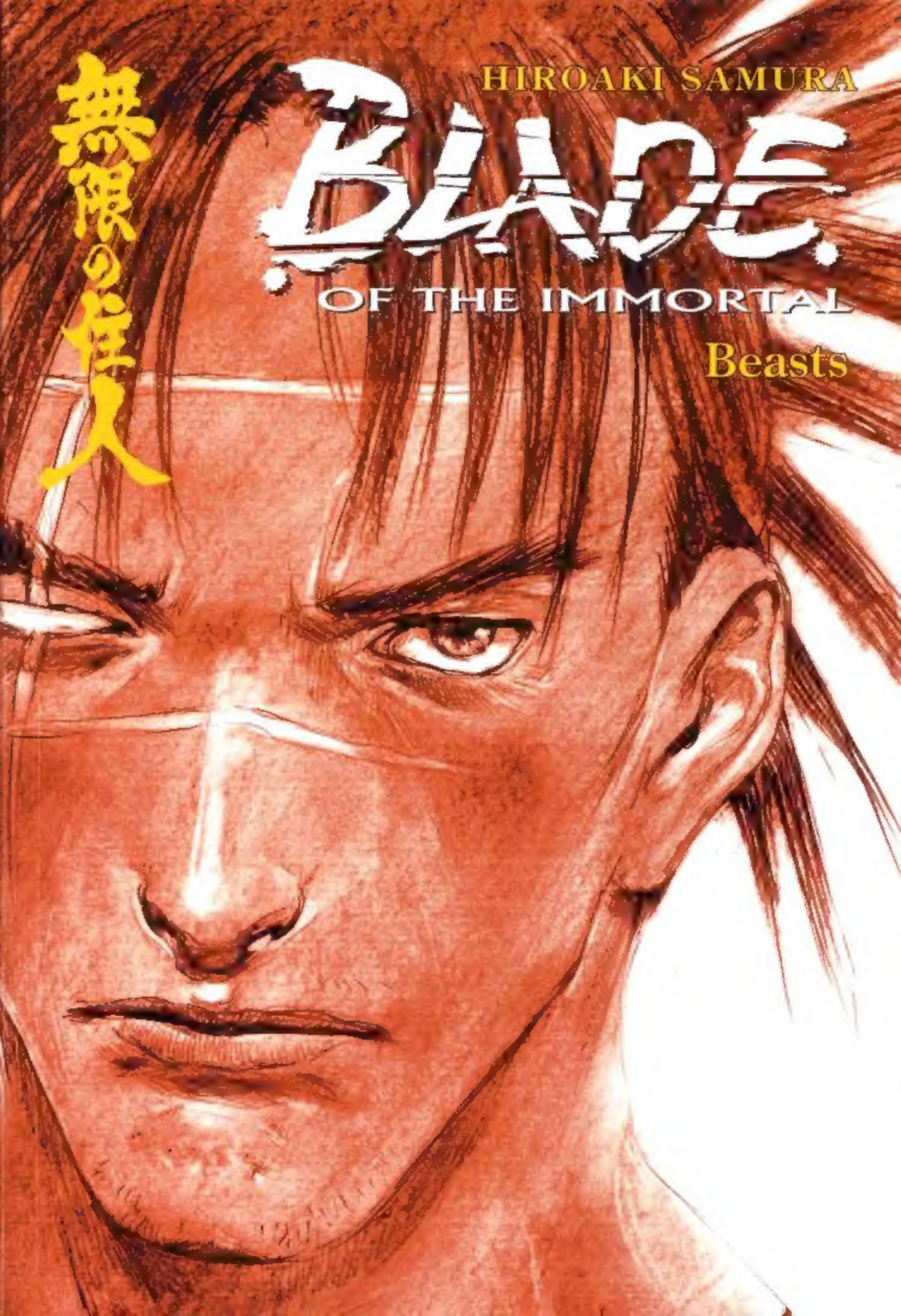
HIROAKI SAMURA
無限の住人
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL
Beasts

# BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

## Beasts

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**English-language version produced by Studio Proteus for Dark Horse Comics, Inc.**

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# BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story
**HIROAKI SAMURA**

translation
**Dana Lewis & Toren Smith**

lettering and retouch
**Tomoko Saito**

## Beasts

DARK HORSE COMICS®

# ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

## The Swastika

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The arms of the *swastika*, which point in a clockwise direction, are generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century [ca. 1782–3]. *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

## The Artwork

The creator of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, Westernized manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used.

## The Sound Effects & Dialogue

Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the illustrations, we decided to leave those in their original Japanese. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in typical samurai manga and is considered to be one of the features that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, with some characters speaking in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

# GLOSSARY

**Ittō-ryū:** the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

**kawara-ban:** an early form of news tabloid. Roughly printed on wood blocks, these cheap scandal sheets were popular among Edo's working class.

**kenshi:** a swordsman (or swordswoman), not necessarily born into the samurai caste

**mon:** a small coin

**Mugai-ryū:** sword school of the Akagi assassins; literally, "without form"

**Nakasendō:** one of the five main thoroughfares connecting Edo to the provinces. The Nakasendo was the inland route to Kyoto, while the more famous Tokkaido followed the coast.

**rashamen:** a Japanese woman who slept with foreign men, a contemptuous term from the first days of contact between Japan and the West. By the time of this story, almost all such contact was limited to the port town of Nagasaki in southern Japan.

**ryō:** a gold piece

**sekisho:** checkpoint regulating travel from Edo to other *han* (feudal domains). All travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways in and out of Edo.

**tegata (tsuko tegata):** official travel pass for transiting *sekisho*

# BEASTS
## Part 1

HEY, HYAKURIN!
I GOT SOME GRUB... LET'S EAT!

YEOW!
HOT BOWLS!
MM.
HOW'S IT DOIN'? YOUR NECK...
THE PAIN'S GONE, BUT--
.....
?
HUH?
WHAT'S THAT, SHINRIJI?
?! OH... THIS?

I JUST WENT AND SAW THE BOSS. IT'S INFO FOR OUR NEXT GIG.
SURE I KNOW.
THE BOSS?!
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU KNEW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.
NO KIDDING. HUH.
.....
.....
UHM... HYAKU-RIN?
IF WE DON'T... YOU KNOW... GET BACK TO OUR MAIN BUSINESS...
.....
I MEAN... GEEZ, HOW DO I PUT THIS?
?

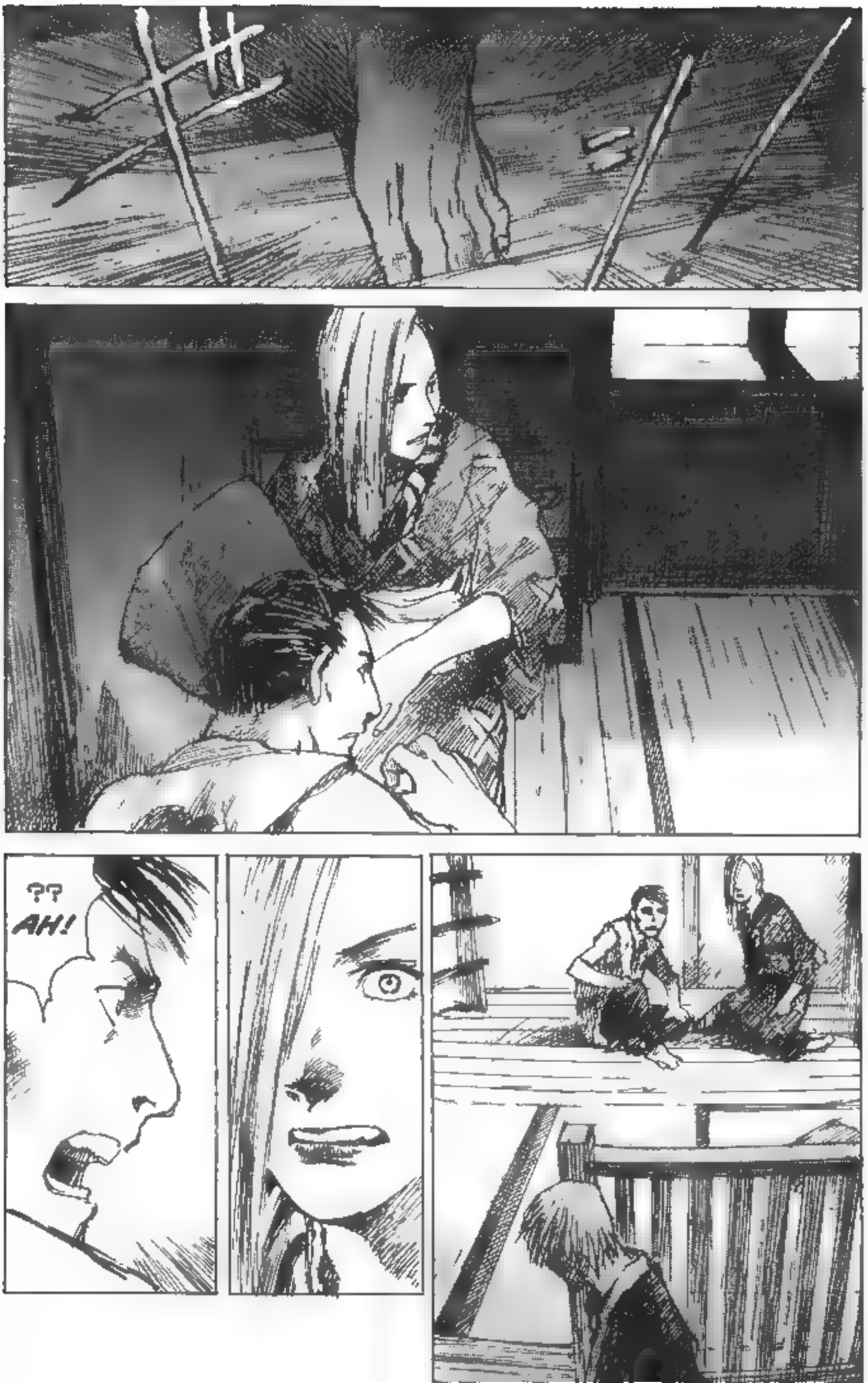
RECENTLY... IT JUST FEELS LIKE...
...LIKE THINGS AREN'T GOING SO GOOD, Y'KNOW? MAYBE 'CAUSE TAKING ON THE BOSS OF THE ITTŌ-RYŪ IS A BIT TOO HEAVY-DUTY FOR US...?
I MEAN, THE ITTŌ-RYŪ'S NOT EXACTLY A BUNCH OF STREET PUNKS.
BEIN' OBJECTIVE AND ALL... IF WE GET ANY CLOSER TO THE TOP THAN WE HAVE ALREADY... WE'LL REALLY BE OUTTA OUR DEPTH.
HYAKURIN... LIKE, I KNOW YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN OR ANYTHING, BUT...
...WHEN WE EARN OUR BOSSES A HUNDRED RYŌ...
...THEY SET US FREE. NO RECORD. INNOCENT!
IF WE JUST STICK WITH CHEAP HEADS, A RYŌ AND A HALF EACH...
...WE CAN DO THREE A MONTH, EASY. IN TWO YEARS, WE COULD WALK.

THIS MUGAI-RYŪ STUFF... YEESH.
OKAY, I'M NEVER HUNGRY... I'M NEVER BORED.
BUT GOING AFTER THESE ITTŌ-RYŪ GUYS... MAN.
MY LIFE KEEPS FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
YEAH. MAYBE.
SO, UM!! HYAKU-RIN!
I...I G-GOT A GREAT IDEA, OKAY? 'LEAST, I TH-THINK IT IS.
WELL, Uh... IT'S LIKE... TWO YEARS OR SO FROM NOW?
WHEN WE GO STRAIGHT? WE WON'T HAVE ANY MONEY, RIGHT...?
NO FAMILY, NO SPOUSES, NO NOTHING WAITING FOR US...
AND SO, UM... THE TWO OF US?

WE COULD... UM...BE .. P-PART-NERS?
IN A BUSI-NESS...?
OR... A ... JUST... Y'KNOW...
P-P-PLAIN OLD "PARTNERS"...?
YEECH! GROSS!
S-SORRY! JOKE! I WAS JUST JOKING!
I DON'T B-BLAME YOU FOR BEING GROSSED OUT. SORRY!!
...?
A FLY.
CRUNCH
OH.
SO. ANYWAY.
UM... NOTHING. FORGET IT. SORRY.
WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE SAYING..?
NEXT TIME I'LL GET US SOME BETTER FOOD.
.....
.....

STILL, HYAKURIN... I'VE BEEN THINKING. YOU DON'T SEEM SO...
.....
WELL, SO DEDICATED *YOUR-SELF.*
COM-PARED TO *GIICHI*, Y'KNOW?
YEAH? WELL...
Hmm
NOW, *YOU.* YOU BIT THE HAND THAT FED YOU... WASN'T IT?
YEAH, BASICALLY. WORKING AS A BODYGUARD FOR A SILK MERCHANT. KINDA DIPPED INTO THE OL' CASHBOX. HEH, HEH...
WHAT?!
WHY IS IT, I WONDER...? IT'S LIKE...
.....
I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO LIVE ANY OTHER WAY.

YOU BOUGHT YOURSELF A DEATH SENTENCE FOR A FEW PIECES OF PETTY CASH?
YOU MUST BE MORE OF AN IDIOT THAN I THOUGHT!
GEEZ... PEOPLE LIKE YOU... THROWN INTO THIS SORT OF SHIT PRACTICALLY BY MISTAKE.
IT JUST ISN'T RIGHT. PISSES ME OFF! I WISH I COULD JUST TELL YOU TO TAKE A HIKE, BUT... CAN'T.
I GUESS...
...IF THERE'S ANYTHING I REALLY DISLIKE ABOUT THIS JOB...IT'S THAT.
HYAKU-RIN... .....
YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOOD AT HEART, AREN'T YOU?
SHUT UP, YOU FUCKING CRETIN!
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!


??
AH!

SHI...
.....
SH-
SHIRA...
?!

THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD IN A DITCH SOMEWHERE.
WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HAIR?

.....
.....
GIICHI.
WHERE IS HE?
WELL... IF IT'S GIICHI YOU WANT...
...HE'S OUT "HUNTING." WON'T BE BACK TONIGHT.
SUCH A SERIOUS FELLOW... NOT LIKE US.
YOU NEED HIM FOR SOME-THING...?
NAW.
OKAY...
.....
SO HE ISN'T HERE.

HYAKU-RIN...
.....
ACTUALLY... TODAY I CAME TO TALK...
...TO YOU.

BACK WHEN WE WERE STAKING OUT THE SEKISHO FOR ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
IT WAS JUST YOU TWO ON THE NAKASENDŌ, RIGHT?
?
YES.
HOW MANY DID YOU GET?
UH-UH. FIVE.
ARE YOU SURE...?
FOUR, I THINK.
YOU CHECKED THE BODIES?
OF COURSE!
OH... WAIT.
ACTUALLY, I RECENTLY HEARD ONE OF THEM SURVIVED.

SO?
HYAKU-RIN...
.....
YOU JOINED THE MUGAI-RYŪ SIX MONTHS EARLIER THAN I DID. YOU'VE GOT SENIORITY.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO KILLING, GIRL, YOU'RE A SNOT-NOSED APPRENTICE-- COMPARED TO ME.
AND SO... AS A GUY WHO'S GOT MUGAI-RYŪ STAMPED ALL OVER HIM...
HEH HEH HEH FOR NOW, ANYWAY.
I THOUGHT I'D GIVE YOU SOME SWEET ADVICE... SHINRIJI, MY MAN-- YOU LISTEN, TOO.

LETTING SOMEONE WHO'S SEEN YOUR FACE ESCAPE ALIVE...
...EVEN BY A FLUKE... WELL, PROS DON'T DO THAT.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU USE HALF-ASSED CRAP LIKE POISON. YOU CAN'T SAY YOU'VE KILLED SOMEONE...
...UNTIL YOU'VE HACKED OFF THEIR HEAD.
WOUND A WILD BEAST, AND YOU'LL PAY FOR IT LATER.
IN SPADES, BLONDIE. SPADES!
THAT'S A LAUGH.
HAH !

I HEAR *KANJI* WHACKED A CHUNK OFF THAT *ARM* OF YOURS, RIGHT...?
I MEAN, LOOK WHO'S *TALKING!!*
.....
.....
*HMPH.* WELL, WHATEVER.
THANKS FOR THE TIP.
.....
.....
AIN'T THAT SWEET.

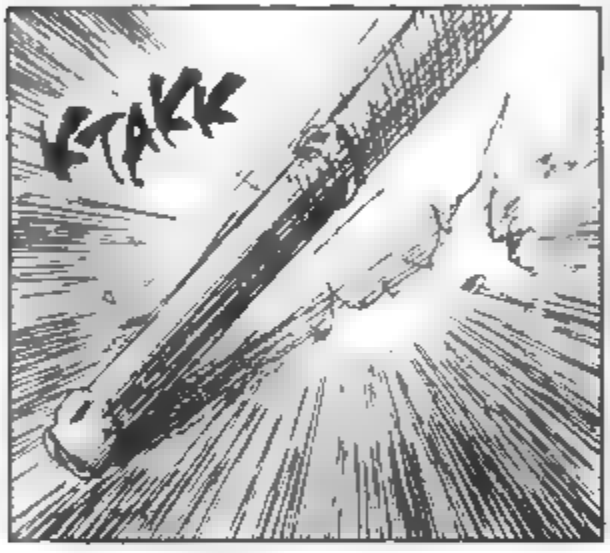
WHY NOT?
YOU'RE NOT WAITING FOR GIICHI?
MAYBE. IF WE BOTH LIVE LONG ENOUGH.
SEE YA.
..IF HE'S NOT HERE.
FORGET IT. IT'S BETTER...

.....
.....
.....?!

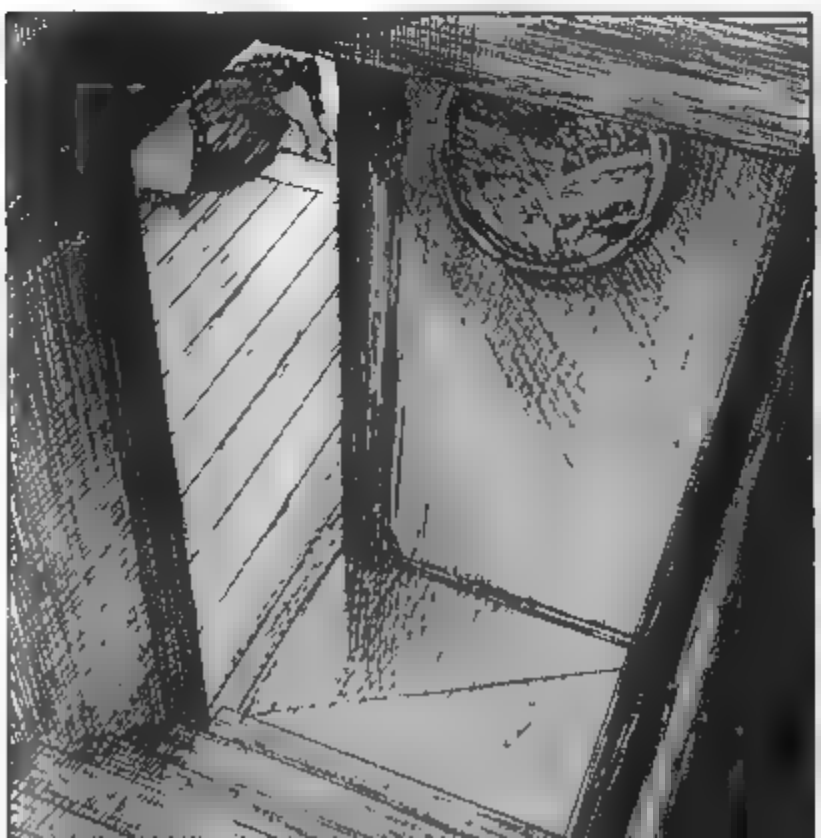
STRANGE...
.....
HE WAS ALWAYS A COLD BASTARD. BUT NOW... HE'S *ICE*.

Y-YEAH. AND HIS *FACE*... DOES LOSING AN ARM DO *THAT* TO YOU?
I DUNNO, HYAKURIN...

HE'S RIGHT... I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING...
SHINRI-JI!
HUH? NOW?!
OKAY SURE
PACK UP! NOW! WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!


KTAKK

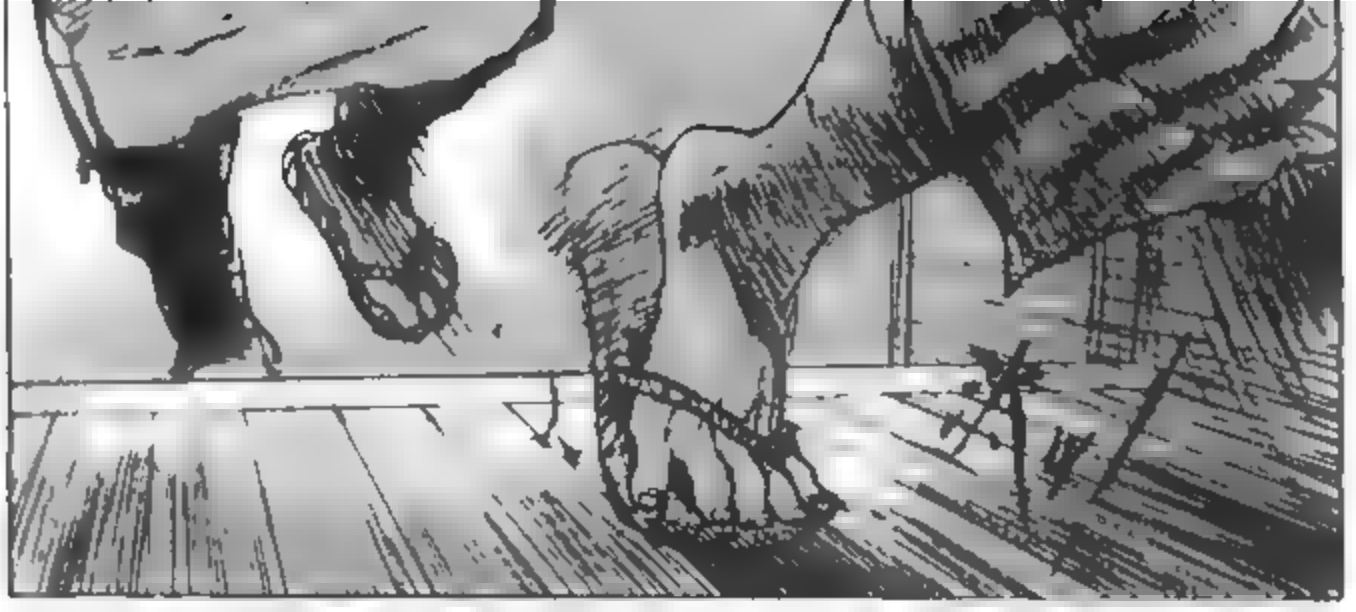
LESSIE THIS ONE AND THIS ONE



!?
WHOO

DECIDED TO WAIT FOR GIICHI AFTER ALL?
WELL, WE'RE--

?



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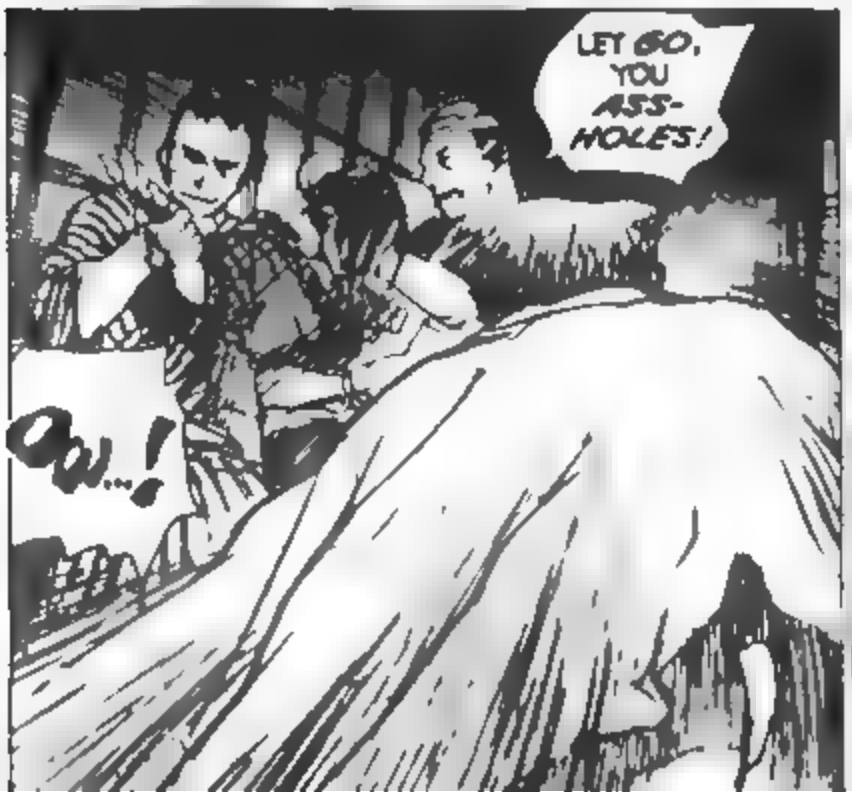
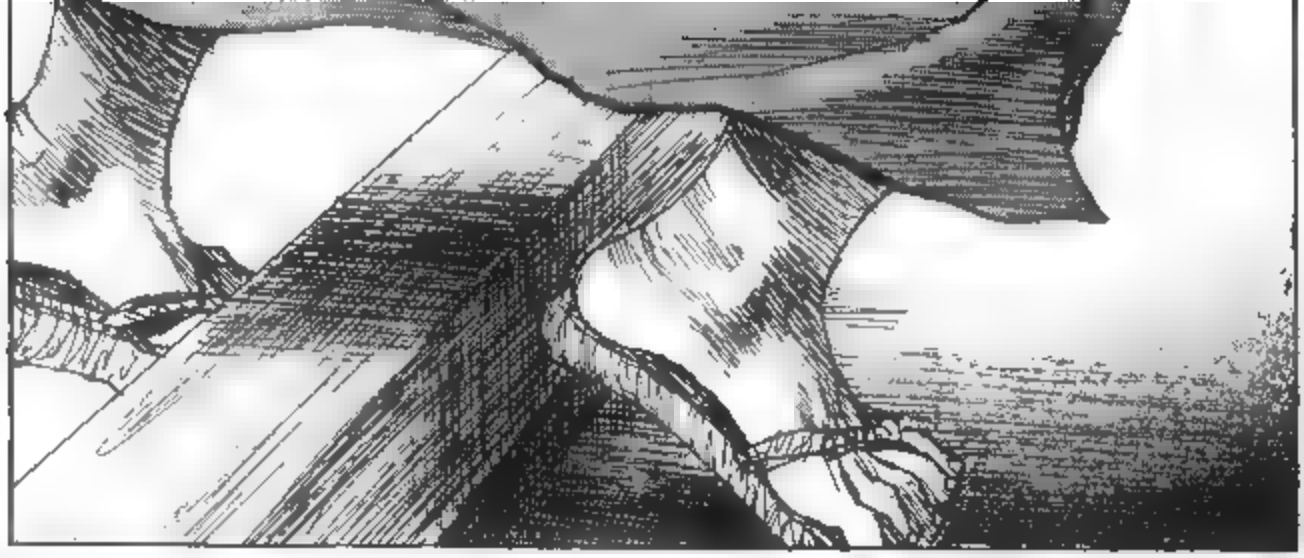

LET GO, YOU ASS-HOLES!
OW...!

SPLIT
SPLIT

SHAK
OKAY! GET TAMASAKI!



HEH, HEH, HEH...
NNG... AAH?!
WELL...? EXCEPT... SHE'S GOT BLACK HAIR.
NAW... IT'S HER, ALL RIGHT.
!
SEE? CHECK IT OUT!

HEY, LITTLE LADY... YOU REMEMBER THIS FACE?
HEH, HEH... PROBABLY NOT, HUH? I MEAN, WHY *BOTHER*?
ONE OF THOSE *CANNON FODDER* SWORDSMEN YOU LIKE PUMPING FULL OF THOSE LITTLE POISON DARTS.
*DEAD MEAT.* SO WHY WASTE THE EFFORT? EXCEPT THIS ONE *PULLED THROUGH!*
HEH, HEH... THAT'S *RIGHT*, BABE.
LOOKS LIKE YOU REMEMBER ME *NOW*.

CAN'T MOVE MY TWO MIDDLE FINGERS.
THAT DAMN *POISON* YOU USED ROTTED MY MUSCLES.
PLUS THIS MESSED-UP *EYE*...
PRETTY MUCH WASHED UP AS A *KENSHI*.
SINCE THEN...
I *DREAM* OF YOU EVERY NIGHT. *EVERY SINGLE NIGHT*.
Y-YOU BITCH... YOU *FUCKING BITCH!*
HOW TO PAY YOU BACK... THAT'S *ALL* I THOUGHT ABOUT.

I AIN'T GONNA JUST *KILL* YOU, BABE. NAW... IT'S GONNA BE *SLOW*. I'M GONNA DESTROY YOUR *BODY* AND *MIND* AN INCH AT A TIME!
YOU'RE GONNA *WISH* YOU WERE DEAD, BITCH.

LOOK IN *BACK!*
THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A COUPLE OF GUYS HERE WITH HER!

I SAW A FACE LOOKIN' OUT THE SECOND FLOOR.
OH, YEAH?
HEY! HE'S UPSTAIRS! UP-STAIRS!
HMM...
COME ON, YOU! GET UPSTAIRS!
WHAT'S YER NAME AGAIN!

HYAKU-RAN...!!
WHAT THE FU--?! GET HIM!!!
?! HUH?

NO, SHINRIJI! RUN!
THESE GUYS ARE ITTŌ-RYŪ!
YOU CAN'T TAKE ALL OF THEM!
DIE... !!
CHUKK
HUH?
AW, SHIT!
!

AGGHK!
HEY!
HYAKU-RIN...!
.....
.....!!
FWAP

GIVE ME A FUCKIN' BREAK!
WHAT KINDA FANTASY YOU LIVE IN, ANYWAY...?
STUPID LITTLE PUNK!

THERE AIN'T NO REAL HEROES IN THIS WORLD!
AAA!

WHRAK

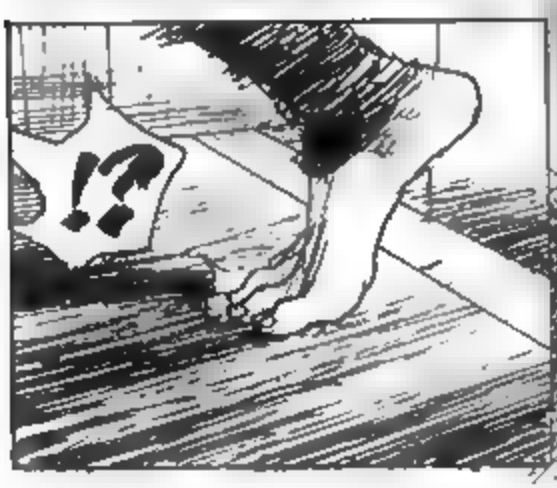
WHA-?!

UGFF!

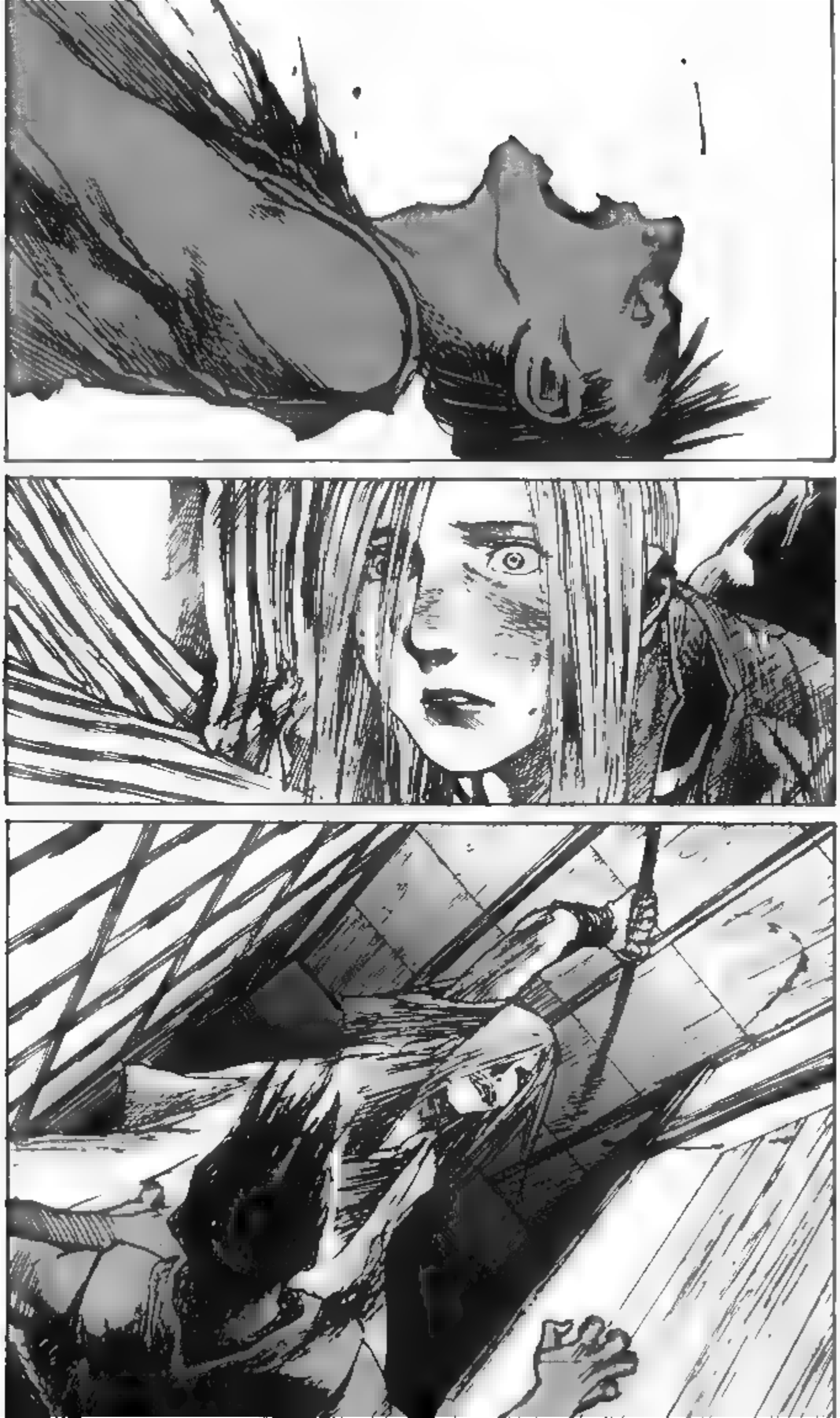
Huh?!
HOLY SHIT!
TOD
S-SORRY, MAN!
Uh...
GLUP

MYAKU-
RIIIN..!

OH,
SHIN-
RIJI...
.....


!?

"CONTROL THE TERRAIN," HE SAID. NOW I SEE WHY.
YOU HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF THE DIMENSIONS.
.....
.....
.....



HEE..
...
YOU.
HOW MANY DID HE KILL? GO SEE.
UH...
SURE THING, KINUKA!

LOOKS LIKE... FOUR.
SUICIDE... DAMN PUNK.
FOUR! DAMN IT.
NOT GOOD. THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET FROM ABAYAMA.
MORE TO THE POINT. IT'S NOT JUST THESE TWO.
WE LOST NINE OF OUR MEN IN THE DECOY OPERATION.
SO AT LEAST TWO, THREE MORE...
LET IT GO, KINUKA.
OKAY, GUYS DIED. THAT SUCKS.
BUT IT'S HIS-TORY.

JUST GIVES US MORE REASON TO ENJOY FUCKING UP THE BITCH.
IF WE MAKE HER COUGH UP EVERYTHING SHE KNOWS, YOU THINK THE OLD MAN'LL COMPLAIN? SHIT, HE'LL KISS OUR ASSES!
.....
.....?
!
WHOO
OOG!

AH--!
FSD
MNNGGGAAAHHH!

KRAK
DON'T PROVOKE HER, FOOL! YOU CAN'T PREDICT HOW PEOPLE WILL ACT WHEN THEY SEE THEIR FRIENDS KILLED!
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE!

Y-YEAH... RIGHT.
LET'S GO. EACH OF YOU CARRY A BODY.
WHAT ABOUT FUJII?
HE'S KINDA IN TWO PIECES...

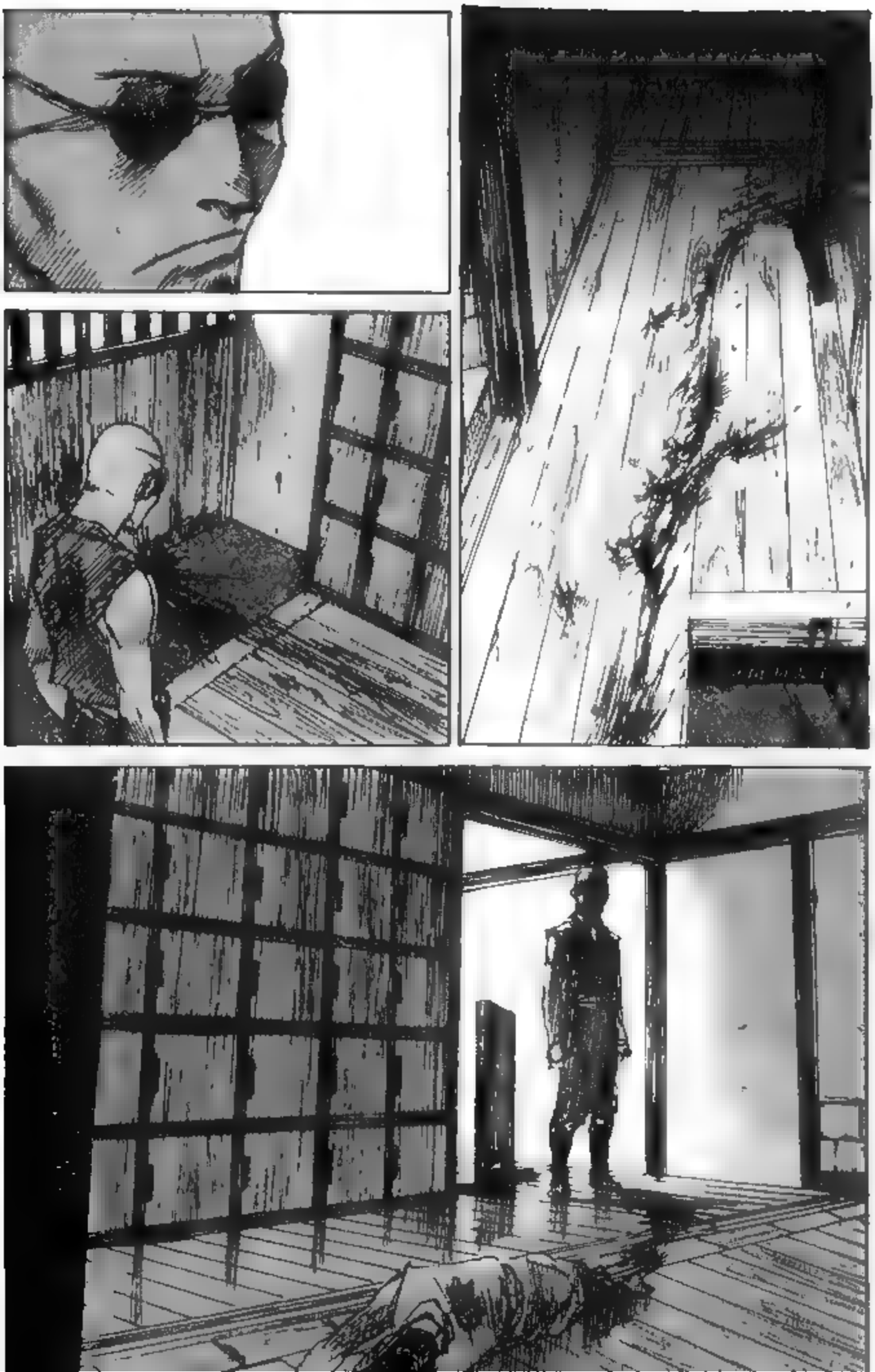
WHERE WE GONNA TAKE 'EM? THAT PLACE OVER IN FUKAGAWA AGAIN?
WHY NOT? IT'S *MADE* FOR IT.

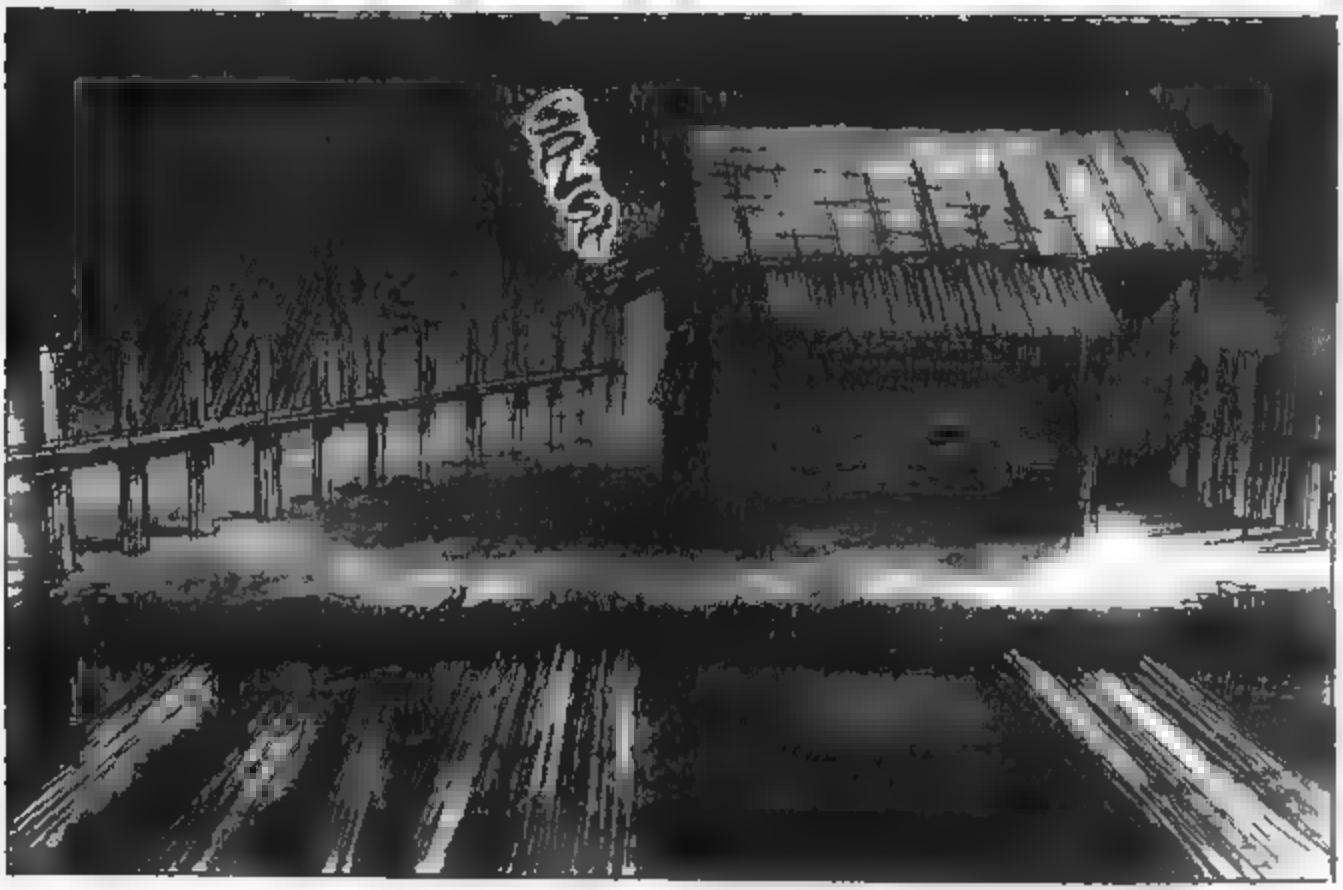
I DUNNO, MAN. I DON'T LIKE DUMPING GUYS NEAR THAT OLD, DESERTED *WHORE-HOUSE!*
COME ON! IF YOU'RE GONNA BE A GHOST, WHY NOT NEAR A WHOREHOUSE? HAW, HAW!

HO!! FINALLY! SO... HOW'D IT GO?
LIKE SHIT. BUT WE GOT HER.
GUESS IT PAYS TO TRUST STRANGERS.
IT WAS JUST LIKE YOU SAID, PAL. DON'T KNOW WHO THE HELL YOU ARE...
...BUT THANKS FOR THE TIP.
IT FILLS ME WITH RIGHTEOUS JOY TO HELP MY FELLOW MAN.
HEH, HEH... SO IT WAS NOTH-ING.

NOW... YOUR SIDE OF THE BARGAIN?
OH, YEAH. RIGHT.
BUT... IS THIS *REALLY* ALL YOU WANT?
I MEAN... JUST ONE LOUSY *YEGATA?*
THIS LITTLE SCRAP OF PAPER IS ALL THE REWARD I DESIRE...
...MY FRIEND.

BEASTS
Part 2



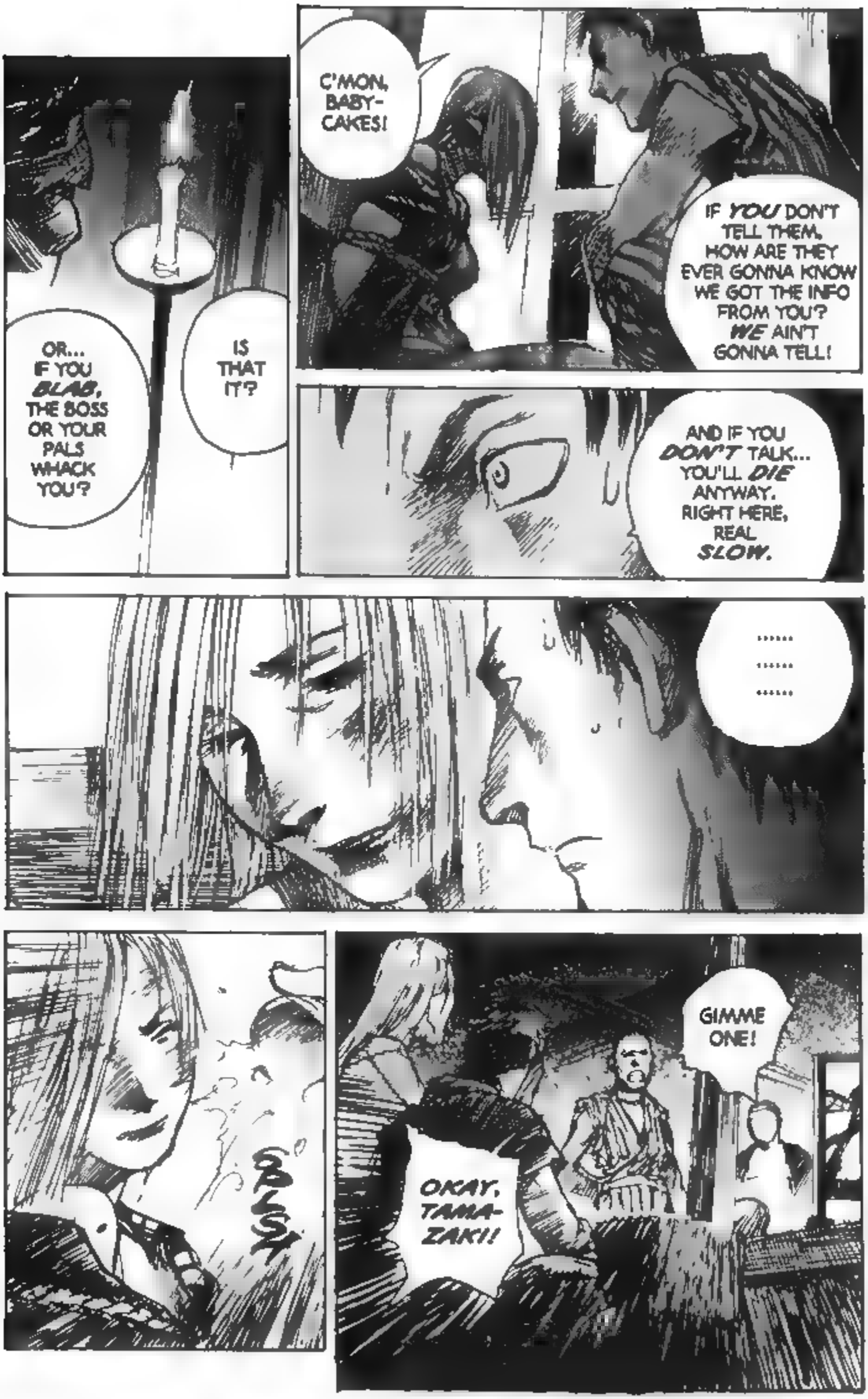


KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF
KOFF

.....
WELL. SHIT.
CUT HER DOWN.
I'M TIRED OF HITTING HER.
MAN, IT'S HOT IN HERE...
YEAH... CAN'T WE OPEN THE DOOR?
NO! SOMEONE MIGHT HEAR HER SCREAM. WE DON'T WANT ATTENTION.
REMEMBER OUR DEAD COMRADES, AND ENDURE.

TAMA-ZAKI ..?!
HEH HEH HEH... I'M READY.
AND SO ARE THESE BABIES.
DRINK!

GOOD... STILL GOT SOME LIFE IN YOU.
EXCELLENT. BE A BITCH IF YOU CROAKED TOO *EASY*.
Y'KNOW...BEFORE I JOINED THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ*, I GOT TO HELP TORTURE *CHRISTIANS*. NOW, *THAT* WAS SOME *SERIOUS* SHIT. PEELING OFF THEIR SKIN...
RAPING AND SLICING UP GIRLS, RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEIR PARENTS... MOLTEN SULFUR DOWN THE THROAT... YEAH.
COMPARED TO *THAT*, BABE...
...WE'RE JUST PLAYING A LITTLE *ROUGH*, HERE.
.....
.....
SHIT... I DON'T *GET* IT. YOU *OWE* THESE GUYS SO BAD...
...YOU'D *DIE* FOR THEM?


C'MON, BABY-CAKES!
IF YOU DON'T TELL THEM, HOW ARE THEY EVER GONNA KNOW WE GOT THE INFO FROM YOU? WE AIN'T GONNA TELL!
IS THAT IT?
OR... IF YOU BLAB, THE BOSS OR YOUR PALS WHACK YOU?
AND IF YOU DON'T TALK... YOU'LL DIE ANYWAY. RIGHT HERE, REAL SLOW.
.....
.....
.....
GIMME ONE!
OKAY, TAMA-ZAKI!
SLSH

MMM. TASTY!
LOVE THE SMELL...
...OF BARBE-QUED MEAT.
BUT YOU GOTTA SPICE IT WHILE IT'S HOT, YEAH?
NOW THIS RED STUFF, SEE, IS MY SPECIAL RECIPE-- PEPPER MIXED WITH VINEGAR.
FIRST WE DIP THIS HERE NAIL IN IT...
NOW... LET'S PLUG THAT HOLE UP SO IT DON'T BLEED.
AH...!

NNG...
AAH.
AGKC!
WOMAN!
TALK!

YOUR BRAVE RESISTANCE IS *MEANING-LESS.*
WE CAN ALREADY GUESS WHO HIRED YOU.

?!

THE REST OF YOU MAY NOT KNOW, BUT THESE PEOPLE ONCE ATTACK-ED...
...*MAGATSU TATO.*

HE KILLED BOTH HIS ATTACKERS. BUT WHEN HE QUESTIONED WHO HIRED THEM, AS *WE* DO NOW...

...ONE OF THEM BROKE.
AND WITH HIS LAST BREATH... "AKAGI."
AKAGI...?
I SAID IT BEFORE.
HOW COULD TWELVE ITTŌ-RYŪ MEN GO FORTH... AND ALL BE DEFEATED?
WHO COULD ASSEMBLE SUCH EXTRA-ORDINARY FIGHTERS...?
ONLY A FAMOUS SWORDSMAN... OR A HIGH OFFICIAL.
WITH THE FIELD THUS NARROWED, AND A THOUSAND ITTŌ-RYŪ SPIES IN EDO...
...SIMPLE FOOT-WORK WILL FIND OUR MAN.

SO, WOMAN--
--SAY NOTHING, AND STILL WE FIND OUT, EVENTUALLY. BUT SAY NOTHING... AND WE KILL YOU.
SPEAK! BEFORE HE DRIVES IN ANOTHER... AND ANOTHER.
"AKAGI"... COMPLETE THAT NAME!
AND... HOW MANY ARE YOU?
"AKAGI"...?
.....
.....
DAMN... NEVER HEARD IT... BEFORE...

A SETUP ...?
FUCKING SHOW-OFF...
.....
WAIT...
.....
NO...
.....
AKASI?
"AKASI"...
.....
WAS IT?!
HEH
HEH... HEH HEH HA!
AKASI...? HEY...
MESSAGE FOR MR. AKASI!

HUH?!
AHHA HAHA HAHA!
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT?!
CRAZY BITCH...!
HEE HEE HEE!
AKAGI'S ALREADY HERE, BOYS!
RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSES!

AND YOU LOSERS DON'T EVEN NOTICE!
SITTING ON YOUR ASSES IN THIS LOUSY DUMP... HAH!
YOU'RE ALL DEAD MEAT, YOU STUPID FUCKERS!
BWA HAH HAH HAH!
AH...!?
WHAP

Hunnk...
Hunnk...
.....
.....
.....
Y-
YOU...
...
YOU FUCKING BITCH.
OKAY. WE KEEP HER ALIVE ONE MORE DAY. BUT IF SHE'S NOT SINGING BY THE SECOND MORNING...
...I SAY WE HACK OFF HER ARMS AND LEGS, NAIL HER TO ONE OF THOSE LOGS OUTSIDE...
...AND LEAVE HER AS A WARNING FOR HER PALS.
YOU GUYS WITH ME?!

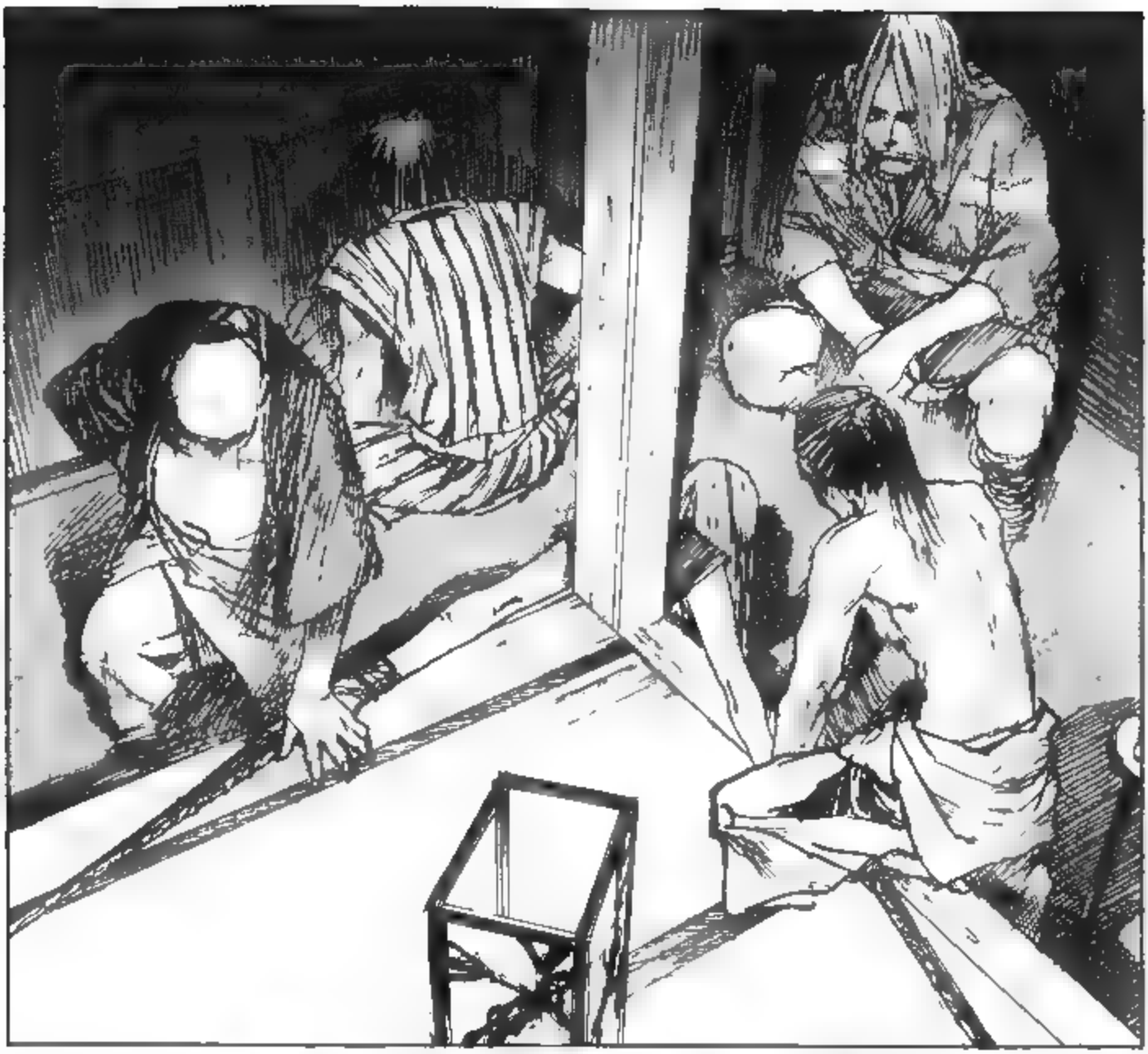
BEASTS
Part 3

=yaawn=
YO.
IT'S ME.
I BROUGHT
SOME
GRUB.
OPEN
UP.

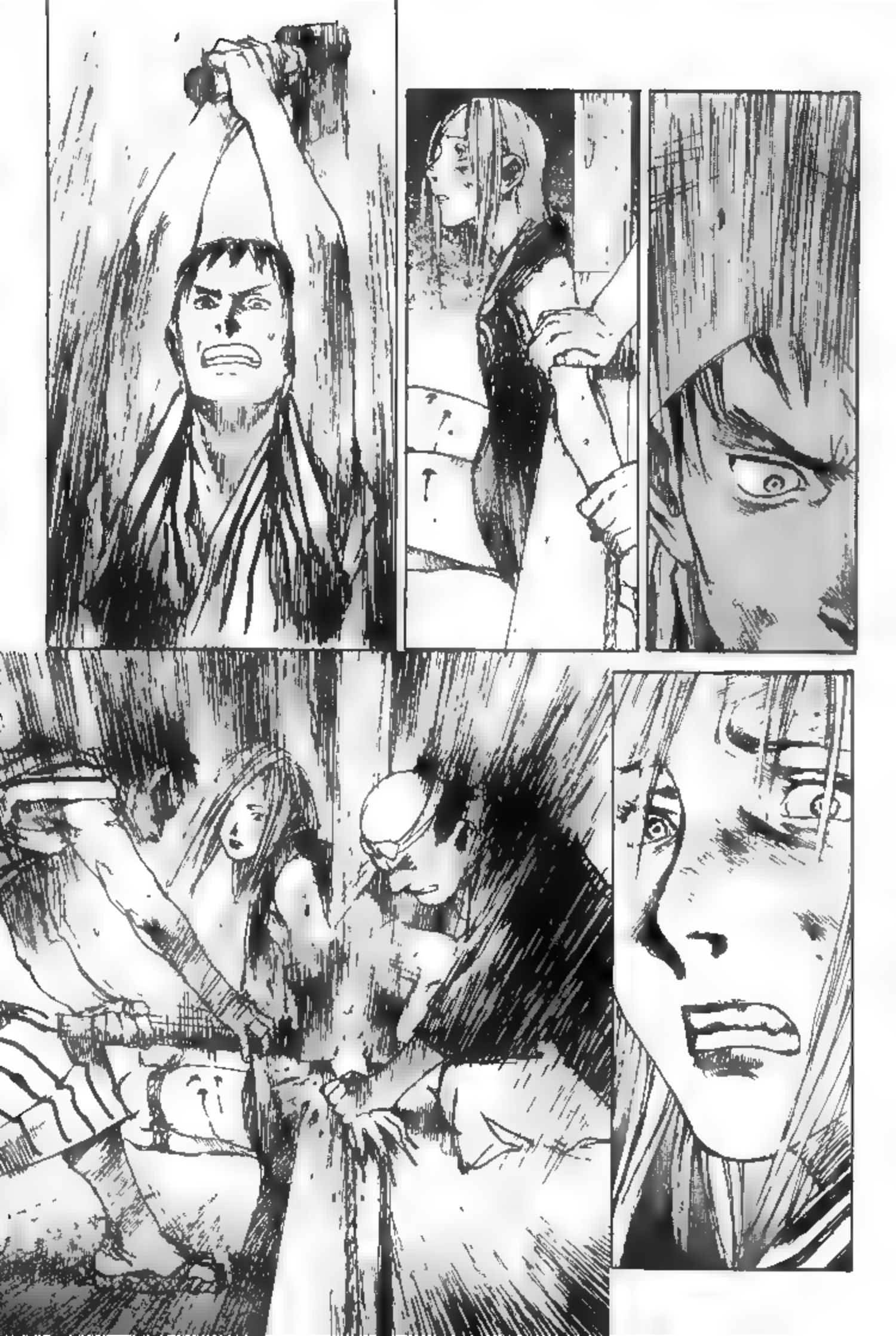
.....
.....
.....
THANKS.
NO PROB.

.....
.....
TOJO.
FINISH IT WITH THE NEXT ROUND.
NO MORE.

WE'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH. NO MORE TIME TO WASTE.
THE WOMAN'S ON THE EDGE OF CRACKING.
IF SHE DOESN'T TALK, SHE'S FATED TO DIE.
DON'T HOLD BACK-- MAIM HER IF NEED BE.



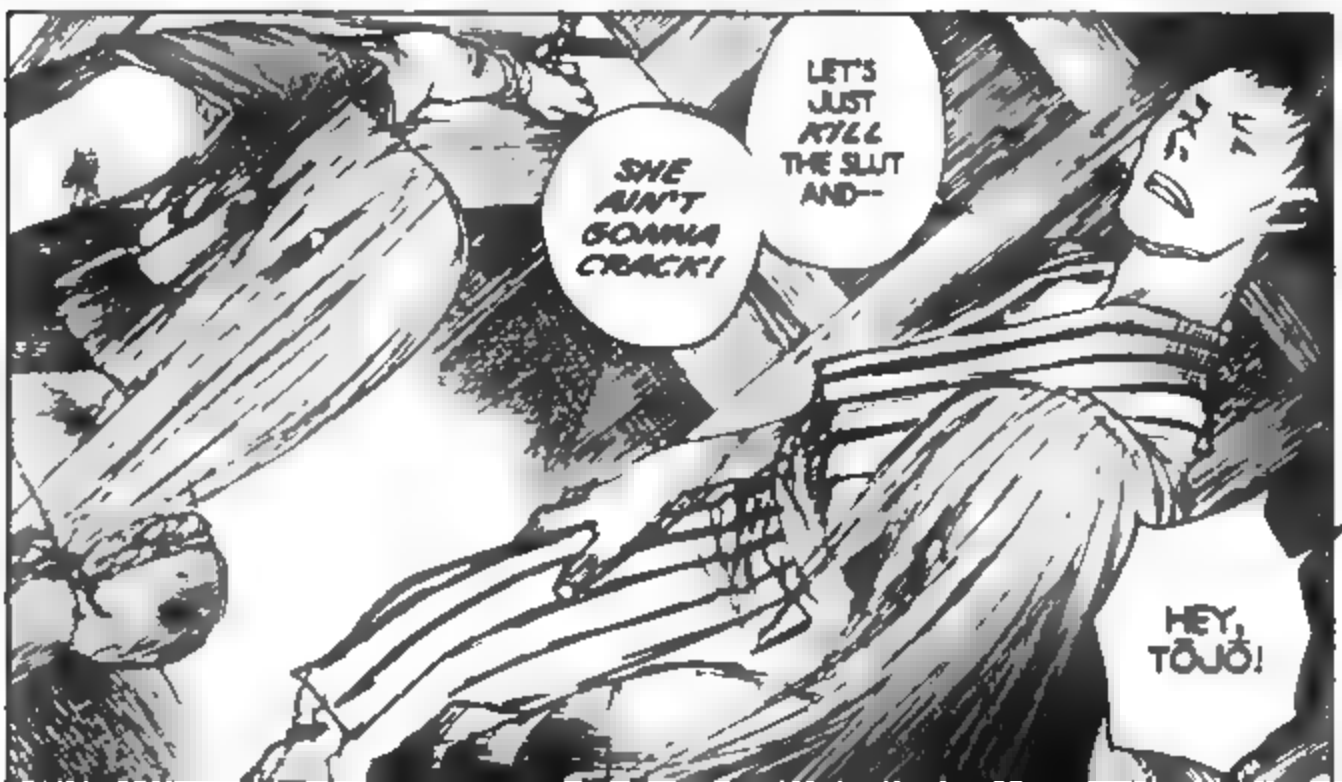
.....
.....
HEH, HEH...
NOW, THAT'S THE FACE OF DESPAIR.
DON'T FREAK, BABE.
I AIN'T GONNA CHOP ANYTHING. THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN... YOU'D PROBABLY JUST CROAK.
.....
.....
BUT... DYING, AND WHAT I'M GONNA DO...
SHIT-- DON'T YOU GET IT, YOU STUPID BITCH?
WE'RE GONNA GET YOUR BOSS ANYWAY, SO WHY NOT TALK?!



AH...
AH...
ERIK
HNK
AUGH!!
TALK!!
TALK, DAMN IT! TALK!
NOW WE DO WHAT-EVER WE WANT!
GET IT NOW, BITCH? ALL BETS ARE OFF!
.....
.....

AAUGH!
KRAK
AAH!
NNG...
hick
EEEAAA!
KRAK

WELL, KINUKA...? CONVINCED YET?
HUH...?!


SHE AIN'T GONNA CRACK!
LET'S JUST KILL THE SLUT AND--
HEY, TŌJŌ!

SO YOU WERE FULL OF SHIT, HUH?!
YOU USELESS FUCK!

"BEFORE I JOINED THE ITTO-RYU, I GOT TWELVE CHRISTIANS TO CONVERT!"
YEAH, RIGHT! SO WHAT IS THIS CRAP?!

LISTEN, ASSHOLE. IF I HAD FIVE, SIX DAYS, THERE ARE WAYS!
BETTER WAYS! YOU GOTTA BREAK 'EM IN THE HEAD, NOT THE BODY!

SHIT... IF WE HAD TIME, WE COULD'A STAYED AT THE BATH HOUSE.
TAKEN TURNS AT IT, KEPT HER AWAKE, PLAYED "GOOD GUY, BAD GUY"...
THEN LET'S JUST RAPE HER!

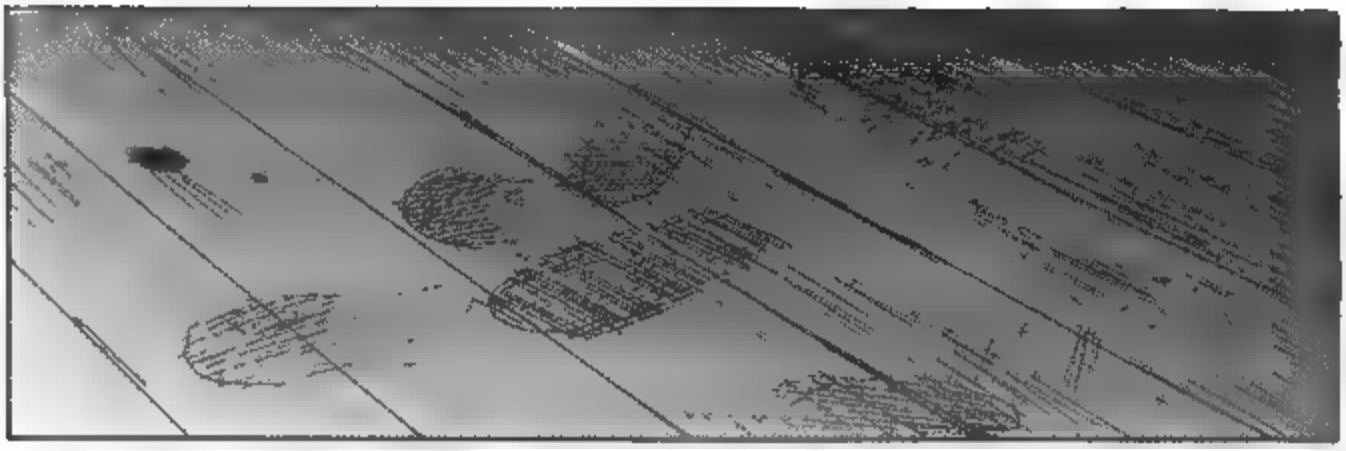
FOR THE ITTŌ-RYŪ!
LOOK... TŌJŌ... KINUKA... WE'RE DOING THIS FOR OUR BUDDIES, RIGHT?
...THE BOSS IS PROBABLY KICKING BACK IN SOME KAGA HOT SPRING!
BUT WHILE WE'RE SWEATING AWAY IN THIS FURNACE...
WORKIN' OUR ASSES OFF FOR WHAT?! NOTHIN'!!
WE'RE TAKIN' THIS TOO FUCKIN' SERIOUS, DAMN IT!

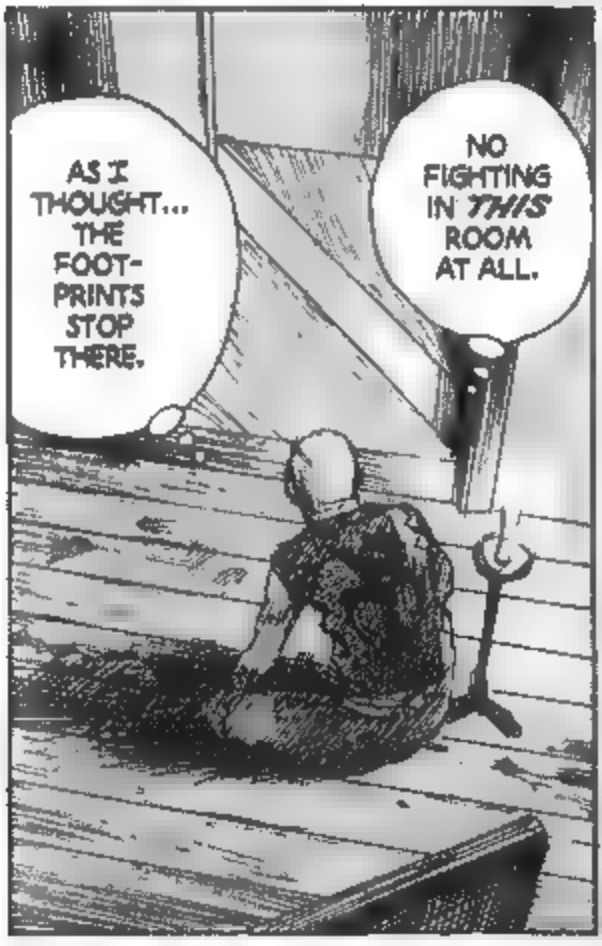
IF WE DON'T AT LEAST GET SOME-THING OUT OF THIS BITCH...
...THAT OLD FART ABAYAMA IS GONNA LAUGH HIS ASS OFF AT US!

HRM.

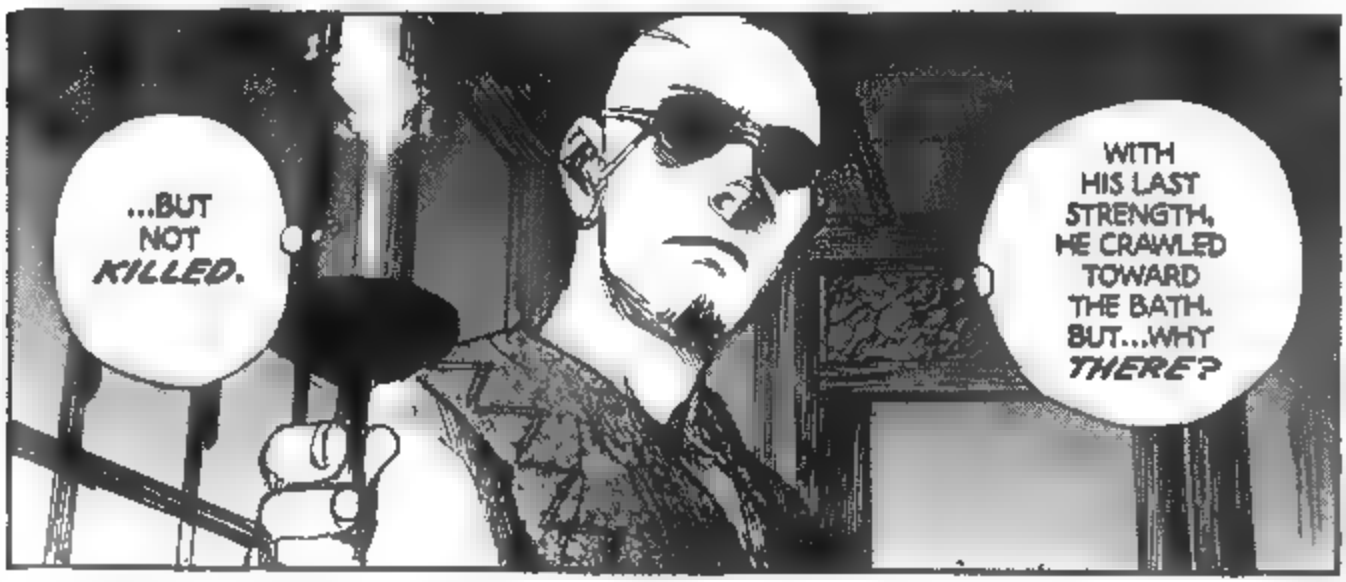
.....
.....
BEFORE HIS BODY STARTS TO GO...
MAYBE BURY *SHINRIJI* NEXT...

.....
.....
SOME-
THING'S
WRONG.
WHY
DIE LIKE
*THIS?*




AS I THOUGHT... THE FOOT-PRINTS STOP THERE.
NO FIGHTING IN *THIS* ROOM AT ALL.

NO QUESTION.
SHINRIJI WAS CUT UP *THERE*...


...BUT NOT *KILLED*.
WITH HIS LAST STRENGTH, HE CRAWLED TOWARD THE BATH. BUT...WHY *THERE*?

IF HE COULD MOVE, HE COULD HAVE GONE *OUTSIDE*, MAYBE BE SEEN BY SOMEONE.
HE MIGHT HAVE *SURVIVED*. SO IF HE DIDN'T *TRY*...
...HE WANTED *ME* TO SEE HIS CORPSE...?
SO I'D *LEARN* SOMETHING FROM HOW HE DIED...?
THEN... THIS *HAND*...

FROM NOW ON, THIS MAN WORKS, EATS AND LIVES WITH YOU.
HIS NAME IS... [redacted] CALL HIM SHINRIJI.
HYAKURIN, I WANT YOU TO RUN HIM FOR ME. DO YOUR BEST.
BI,RK! WHAT?!

LOOK... I DON'T THINK I'M RIGHT FOR THE JOB.
NONSENSE. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO IT.
I...I'M NOT GOOD AT BEING NICE.
THINK! GIICHI OR SHIRA...ARE THEY GOING TO BOTHER TEACHING HIM ANYTHING? MAKOTO IS TOO YOUNG...
...AND ASHIYA AND KUZUYA CAN BARELY HOLD THEIR OWN.
SIR, I'M NOT DENYING... LOOK, I JUST HATE TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE! GOT IT?
HYAKURIN... YOU'RE GOOD WITH YOUR BOW. DAMN GOOD. BUT FRANKLY, YOUR SWORDWORK IS INEPT.
SORRY TO BE BLUNT, BUT... I'M MERELY SAYING THIS FOR YOUR SAKE.

I'M HOPING THIS MAN CAN COMPEN-SATE...
...FOR THIS WEAKNESS OF YOURS, SHINRIJI ...?
AH?! MA'AM, I--
SHUT UP. ARE YOU GOOD WITH A BLADE?
NO, MA'AM! NOT, NOT, NO WAY, MA'AM! I BARELY KNOW--
SHUT UP. MODEST, ISN'T HE?
NOT EXACTLY.
LET'S JUST SAY HE HAS EXCEP-TIONAL... POTEN-TIAL.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST... WE SIMPLY NEED MAN-POWER.
ESPECIALLY PROMISING AND GIFTED YOUNG MEN LIKE HIM. BUT... DIAMOND OR GLASS, IT'S UP TO YOU.
VERY AMUSING, SIR. SHALL I THANK YOU NOW OR LATER...?

Uh... I'M GOOD AT PICKING LOCKS. I LIKE THAT.
BIG DEAL. WE'RE NOT THIEVES.
sigh
SO... CAN YOU DO ANY-THING ELSE?
HEH HEH. GUESS NOT, MA'AM... SORRY.
LOOK. I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY GUYS YOU KILLED IN YOUR PAST LIFE, BUT HERE--
HUH?! MA'AM, I... I'VE NEVER KILLED ANYONE!
SAY WHAT?!
WELL, Uh, RIGHT OUTTA SWORD SCHOOL, I SIGNED UP AS A BODYGUARD WITH THIS SILK MERCHANT, SEE?
...HE CUT MY WAGES!
MY BOSS THERE, HE WAS, LIKE, THIS TOTAL CHEAPSKATE. WHEN I DIDN'T SPEND ALL MY PAY...
SO I COULD SEND SOME HOME SEE

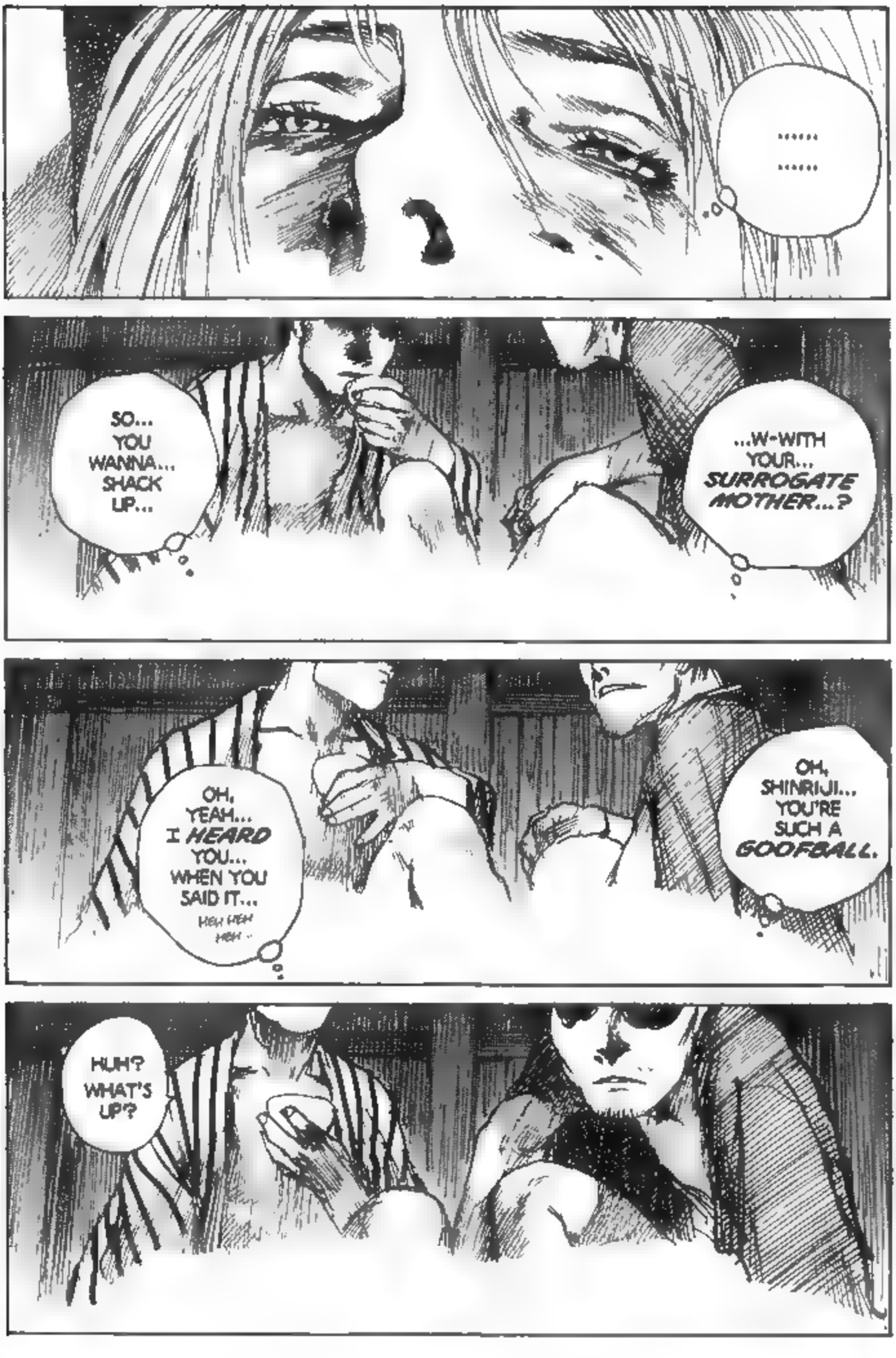
LET ME GUESS--SO YOU QUIT... AND LIFTED SOME CASH ON YOUR WAY OUT.
RIGHT! AMAZING! YOU NAILED IT!
'COURSE. I WAS WORRIED 'BOUT GETTING CAUGHT, SO I ONLY TOOK NINE RYŌ, TWO MON.
SEE, I'D HEARD YOU DIDN'T GET DEATH FOR STEALING UNDER TEN RYŌ.
BUT I HAD ABOUT ONE RYŌ IN SAVINGS. AND THEY SAID I STOLE THAT, TOO! SO...
OH, MAN... HE'S A COMPLETE MORON.
EH...? HMM...
OH, YEAH! WASN'T THAT A COUPLE YEARS BACK? YEAH, I READ ABOUT IT IN THE KAWARA-BAN.
YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT SAMURAI WHO KILLED A HUNDRED COPS AND GOT AWAY?
THINK ABOUT IT. THERE ARE POOR SAPS LIKE YOU OUT THERE...
...LOSING THEIR HEADS FOR CHUMP CHANGE.

AND THEN THIS GUY... SCOT FREE AFTER OFFING ONE HUN-DRED!
SO WHAT DECIDES IT? FATE? DESTINY?
WOW, YOU SOUND LIKE MY GRANNY!
HAH HAH HAH
AHH, SHADDUP.
AAH ?!
WHAT? WHAT?!
H... H... HYA... HYAKU-RIN, MA'AM...
YOUR... YOUR HAIR!

Uh... THE GUYS'LL BE COMING BACK SOON...
AH! S- SORRY!

YOUR MOTHER WAS *REALLY* A NATURAL *BLONDE* ?!
STILL, THAT'S ALMOST *TOO* FREAKY.
SHE... SHE WAS A *RASHA-MEN'S* DAUGHTER.
SHE EVEN HAD *BLUE EYES.*
WITH LOOKS LIKE THAT, AND HER WEIRD NAME, SHE COULD NEVER FIND DECENT WORK.
WHEN I WAS STILL LITTLE, SHE HAD TO COUNT EVERY PENNY. LIFE WAS PRETTY HARD, I GUESS.
*Sigh*
I GUESS IF I WASN'T SO USELESS...
...I COULD'A MADE THINGS MORE *COMFORT-ABLE* FOR HER.
SO, WHERE IS SHE *NOW?*
OH, DEAD 'N' *GONE!*
ABOUT A YEAR BACK

YOUR AGES ARE, LIKE, TOTALLY DIFFERENT, OF COURSE... BUT WHEN I SEE YOU, MA'AM, WITH YOUR HAIR...
...AND YOUR ATTITUDE, AND THE WAY YOU TALK, WELL...
THIS ISN'T MY REAL HAIR COLOR, YOU KNOW. I BLEACHED IT.
IT SMELLS FUNNY, RIGHT...?
NOT ENOUGH TO BOTHER ME! NO, MA'AM!
IT'S LIKE, NOW I REALLY FEEL LIKE WORKING MY BUTT OFF FOR YOU! SORTA LIKE, I TREATED MY MOM SO BAD...
...AND NOW I GOT A SECOND CHANCE, SEE?
HEH HEH HEH


.....
.....
SO... YOU WANNA... SHACK UP...
...W-WITH YOUR... SURROGATE MOTHER...?
OH, YEAH... I HEARD YOU... WHEN YOU SAID IT... HEH HEH HEH...
OH, SHINRIJI... YOU'RE SUCH A GOOFBALL.
HUH? WHAT'S UP?

WHOA?!
HEY! BACK OFF, MAN!
GOD... DAMN... BITCH! SHE WAS SMILING! FUCKING SMILING!!
P- PISSES ME OFF!!
:koff:
koff:
:hnff:

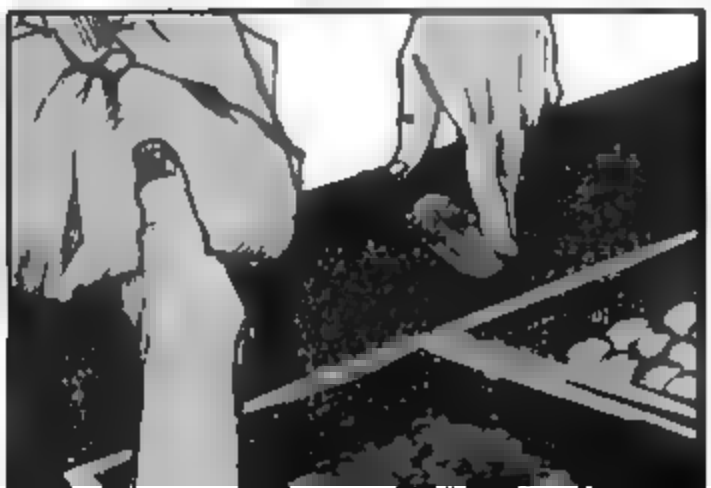
.....
SH... SHINSUL...?
YOU'RE... STILL ALIVE... RIGHT?
R- REMEMBER, NEVER TELL YOUR MOTHER
ABOUT YOUR LADY LOVE... BEFORE SHE SAYS SHE'LL MARRY YOU.

BEASTS

ORDER, SIR?
YEAH... GIMME TWENTY SKEWERS. SOME SWEET, SOME SPICY. MIX 'EM UP

BOUGHT SOME FOOD DOWN THE STREET *YESTERDAY*, TOO, DIDN'T YA?
HUH?
Uh...YEAH, GUESS SO.

WELL, BEEN DOING A LOT A' HOT BABES... TAKES IT OUT OF A GUY, Y'KNOW?
HEH... TOUGH BEIN' A PLAYBOY, EH?



AIN'T EXACTLY COOL OUT HERE, BUT BEATS THE SHIT OUT OF THAT STINKIN' SHACK.
:awhewf:
MAN, I'M DYIN' IN THERE. DON'T KNOW HOW THOSE OTHER GUYS KEEP AT HER...
SHIT... MAYBE IT'S HARDER FOR ME 'CAUSE I'M FAT?
GURK?!

HKK!

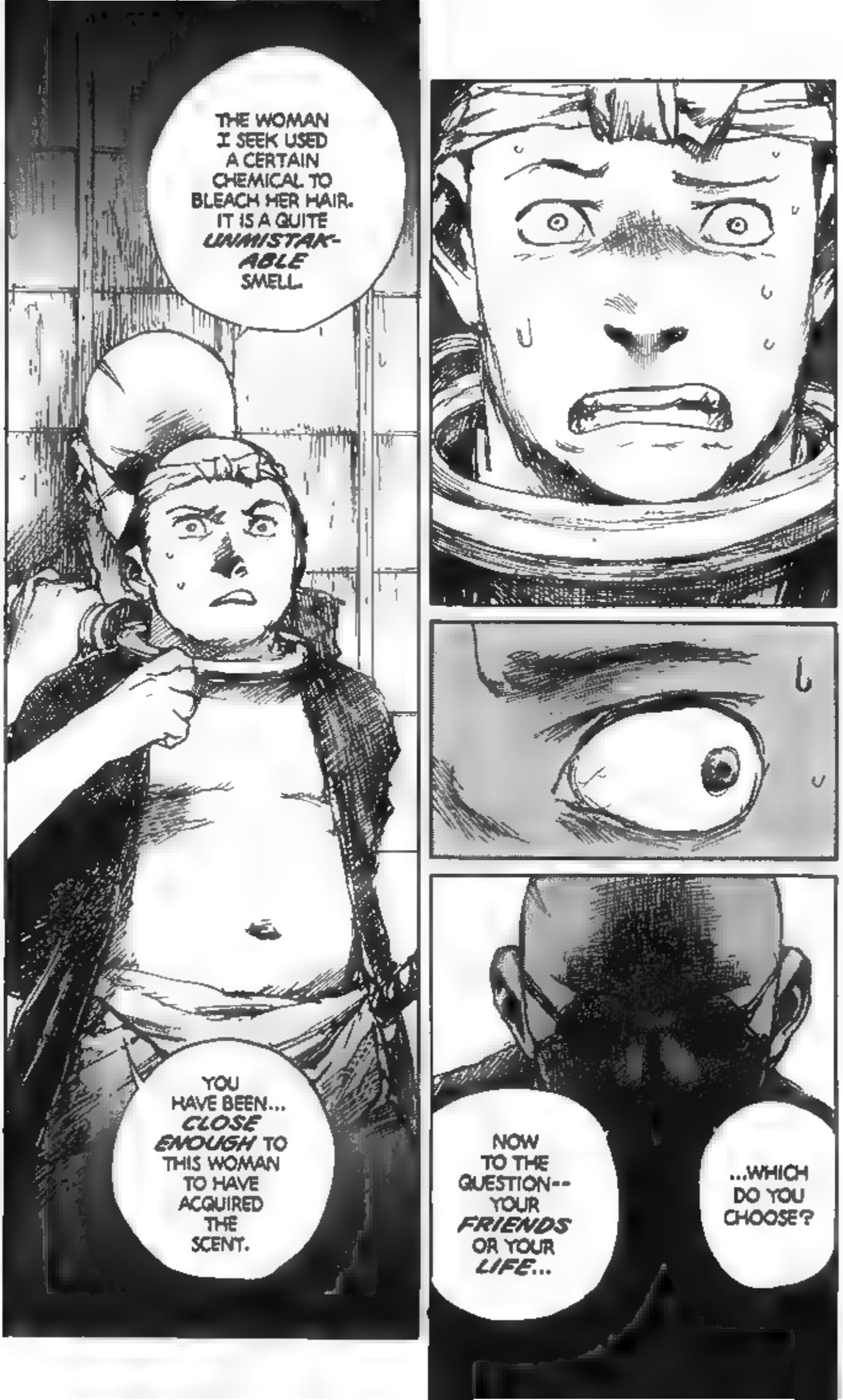
H-
HEY?!
WHO THE FUCK--

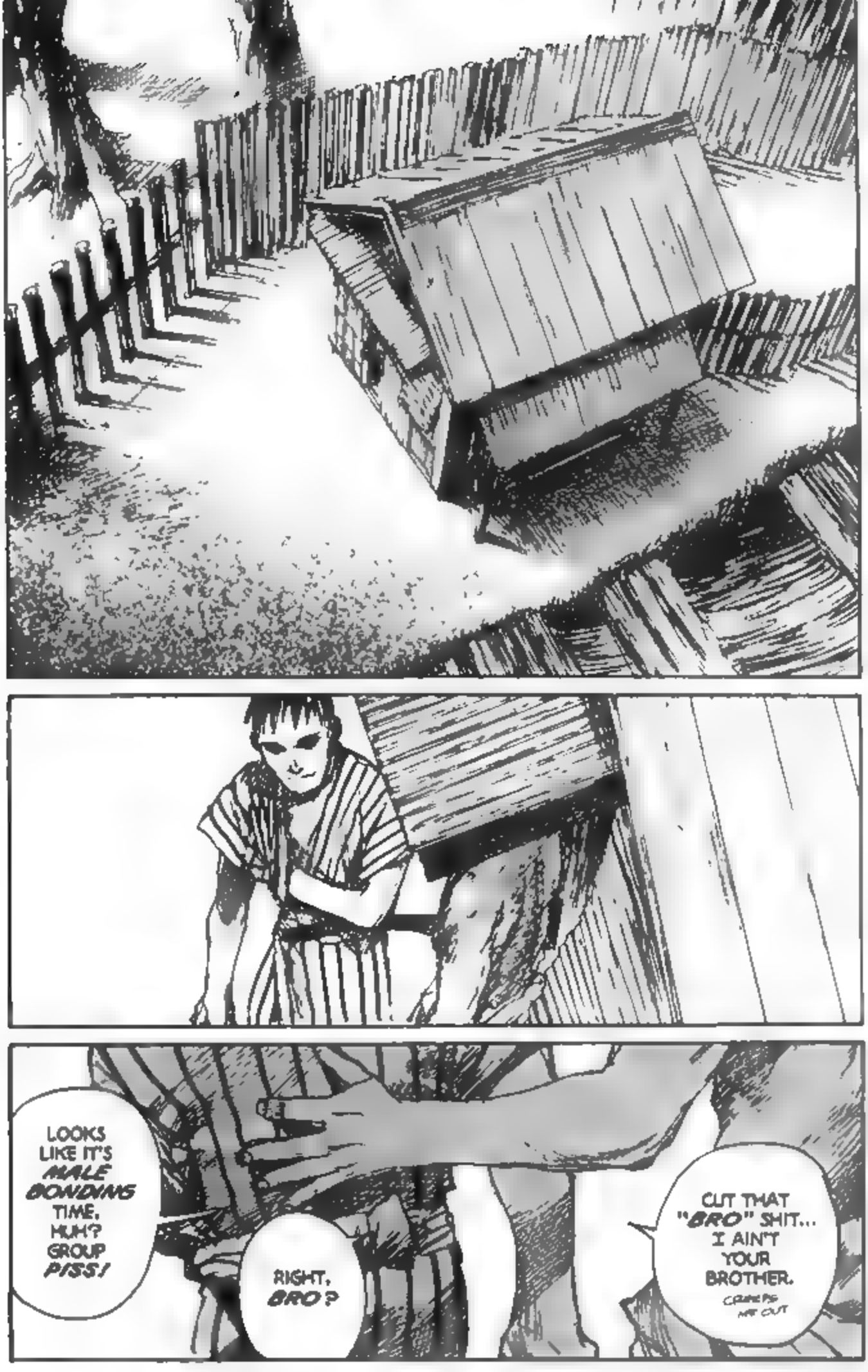
HA-HA!

I HAVE A QUES-TION.
IF YOU WISH TO LIVE... ANSWER WITH THE TRUTH.

YOU ARE PART OF THE GANG THAT HIT A BATH HOUSE TWO NIGHTS AGO.
IT WAS IN KODENMA-CHO. THEY CUT DOWN ONE MAN, KIDNAPPED A WOMAN, AND VANISHED.
I DON'T KNOW NOTHING! I NEVER--
THAT IS NOT MY QUESTION.
I CONSIDER YOUR INVOLVE-MENT FACT.
NOW... THE FINGERS OF THE MAN YOU LEFT... POINTED A CERTAIN DIRECTION.
"SOUTH-EAST, TOWARDS TATSUMI, HERE IN FUKAGAWA.
"WOULD THEY CHOOSE THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT, OR THE LUMBER YARDS BEYOND. .?"
FOR A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WOULDN'T SEE YOU...
...WHERE NO ONE WOULD HEAR THE SCREAMS OF THE TORTURED... I WOULD CHOOSE THE YARDS.

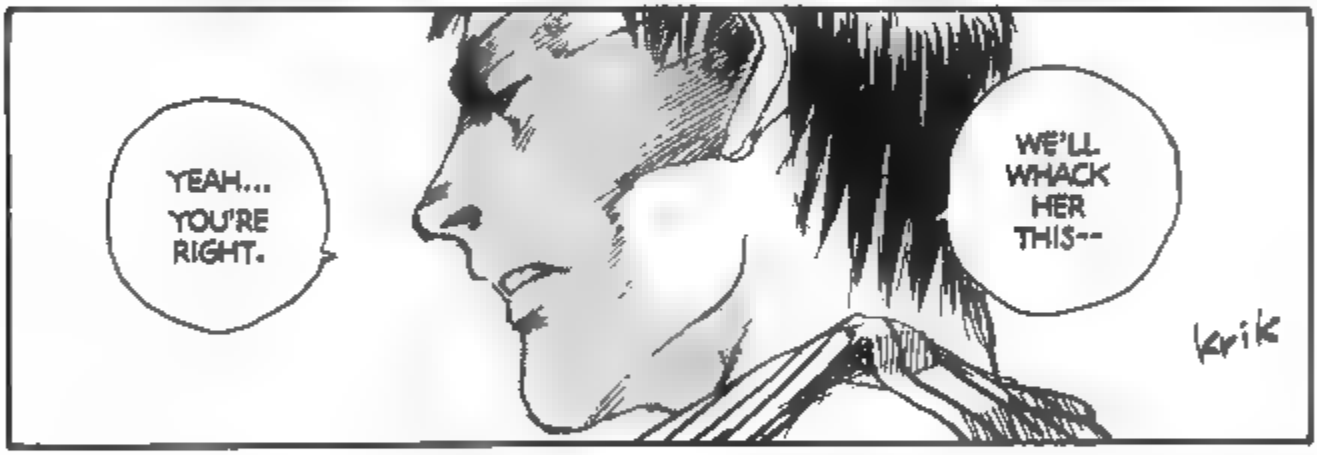
ON THIS BODY...
...THREE SMELLS.
ONE, THE LINGERING SMELL FROM HAVING A WOMAN.
TWO, THE SMELL OF WOOD.
SO WHAT? I'VE LIVED HERE FOR YEARS!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU EXPECT?
LUMBER YARDS OUT BACK, BROTHELS DOWN THE STREET!
WHAT'S SO STRANGE ABOUT--
YES. PERSUASIVE.
BUT THERE IS THE THIRD SMELL...
...OF WHICH I SPOKE. A UNIQUE ODOR.

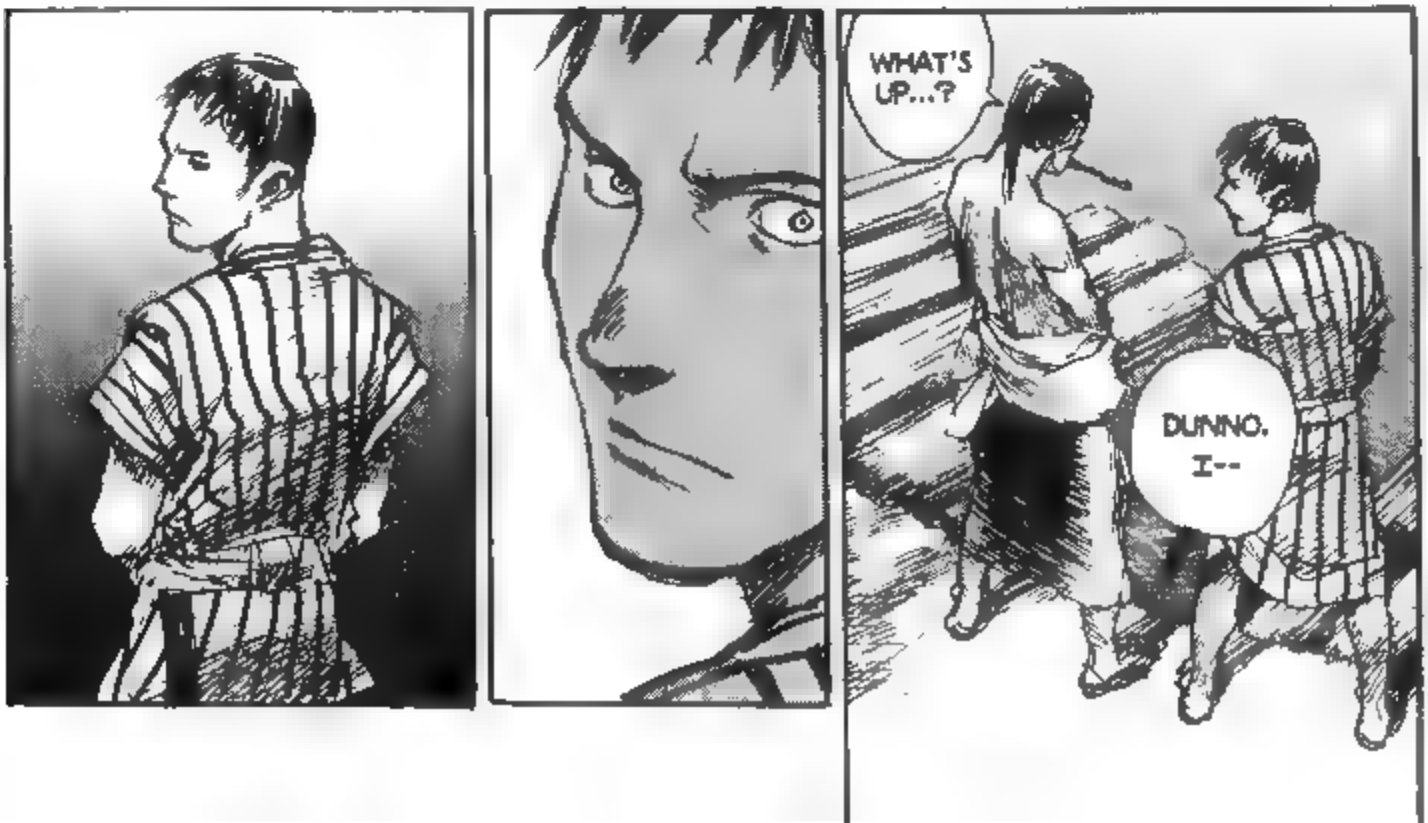

THE WOMAN I SEEK USED A CERTAIN CHEMICAL TO BLEACH HER HAIR. IT IS A QUITE UNMISTAK-ABLE SMELL.
YOU HAVE BEEN... CLOSE ENOUGH TO THIS WOMAN TO HAVE ACQUIRED THE SCENT.
NOW TO THE QUESTION-- YOUR FRIENDS OR YOUR LIFE...
...WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE?


LOOKS LIKE IT'S *MALE BONDING* TIME, HUH? GROUP *PISS!*
RIGHT, *BRO*?
CUT THAT "*BRO*" SHIT... I AIN'T YOUR BROTHER.
CRANE PIG ART CUT

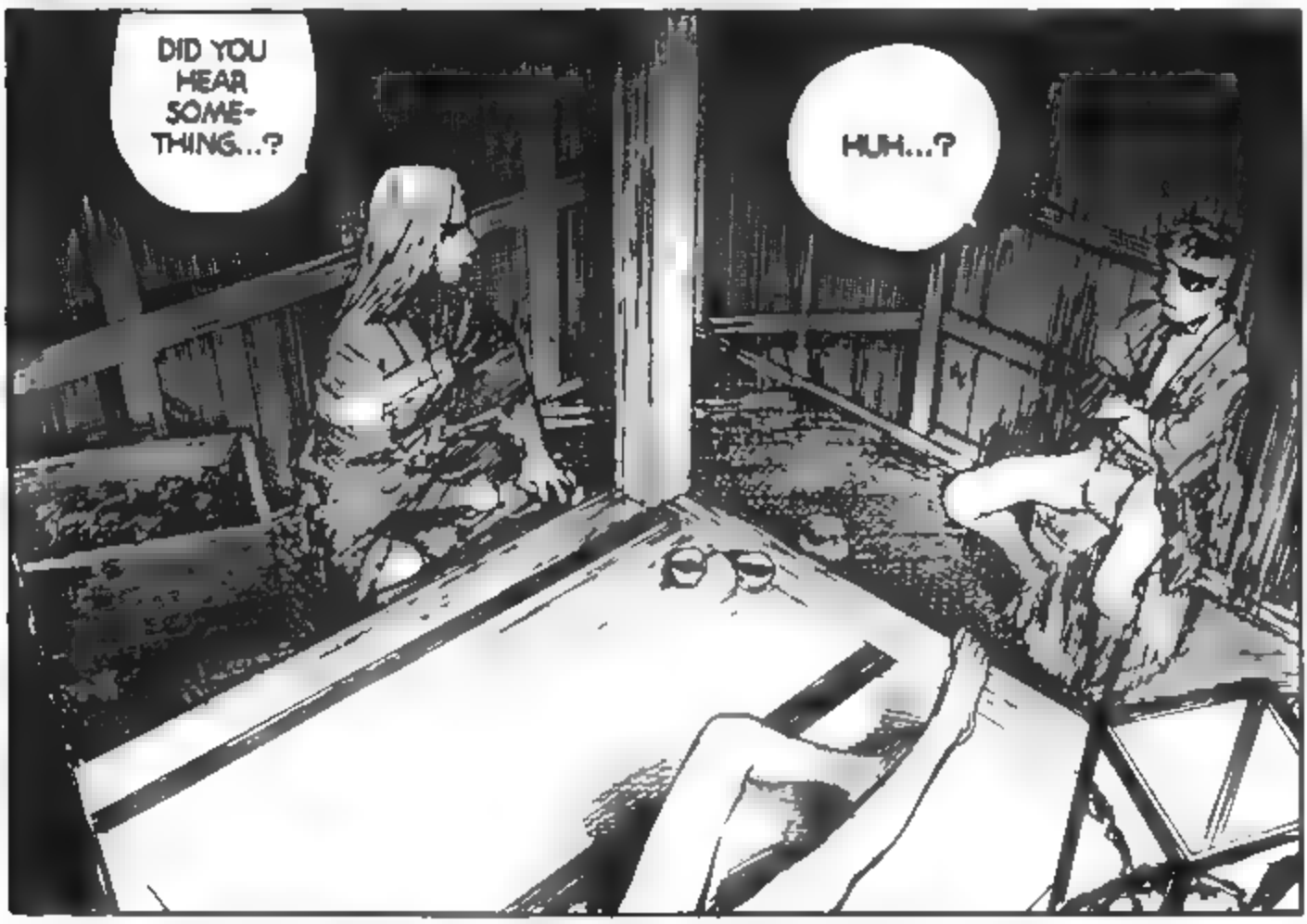
MAN... THAT TAMASAKI... HE'S DONE HER FRONT, BACK, AND SIDEWAYS.
HE'S A *TWISTED* BASTARD, THAT'S FOR SURE.
ANYWAY, TŌJŌ...
...HOW LONG DO WE KEEP THIS UP?
HEY...LAST TIME I WAS DOING HER, DON'CHA THINK SHE WAS GETTING INTO IT?
ARE YOU *NUTS*, MAN?
SHE WAS JUST FLOPPING AROUND 'CAUSE WE WERE TWISTING THAT *ARM* YOU BUSTED UP.
BUT WHADDYA *EXPECT*?
EVER SINCE HE GOT FUCKED UP, HE'S BEEN A HEAD CASE.

.....
.....
IT'S BAD ENOUGH IF HER BUDDIES TRACK US DOWN.
BUT SOMEBODY'S GOTTA OWN THAT SHACK. IF THEY SEND THE COPS AROUND AND WE ALL GET ROUNDED UP... THE BOSS'LL KILL US.

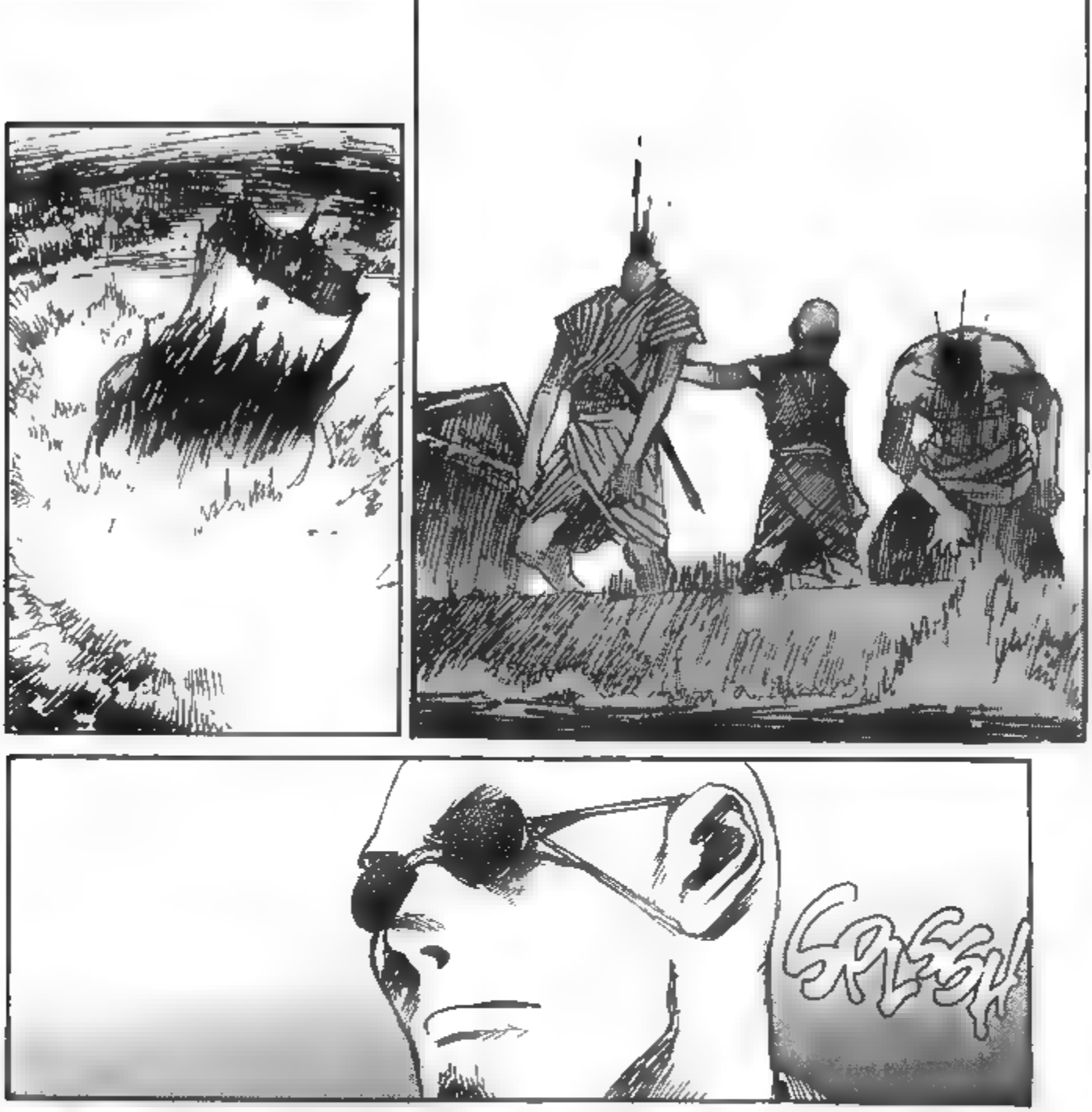

YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE'LL WHACK HER THIS--
Krik


WHAT'S UP...?
DUNNO. I--

AW, SHIT! THEY FOUND US!!
?! WHAT IS THAT FUCKING THING?
AAH?!
HURRY UP AN' GET HIM!
OH MAN!
B-BUT I AIN'T DONE YET!


DID YOU HEAR SOME-THING...?
HUH...?

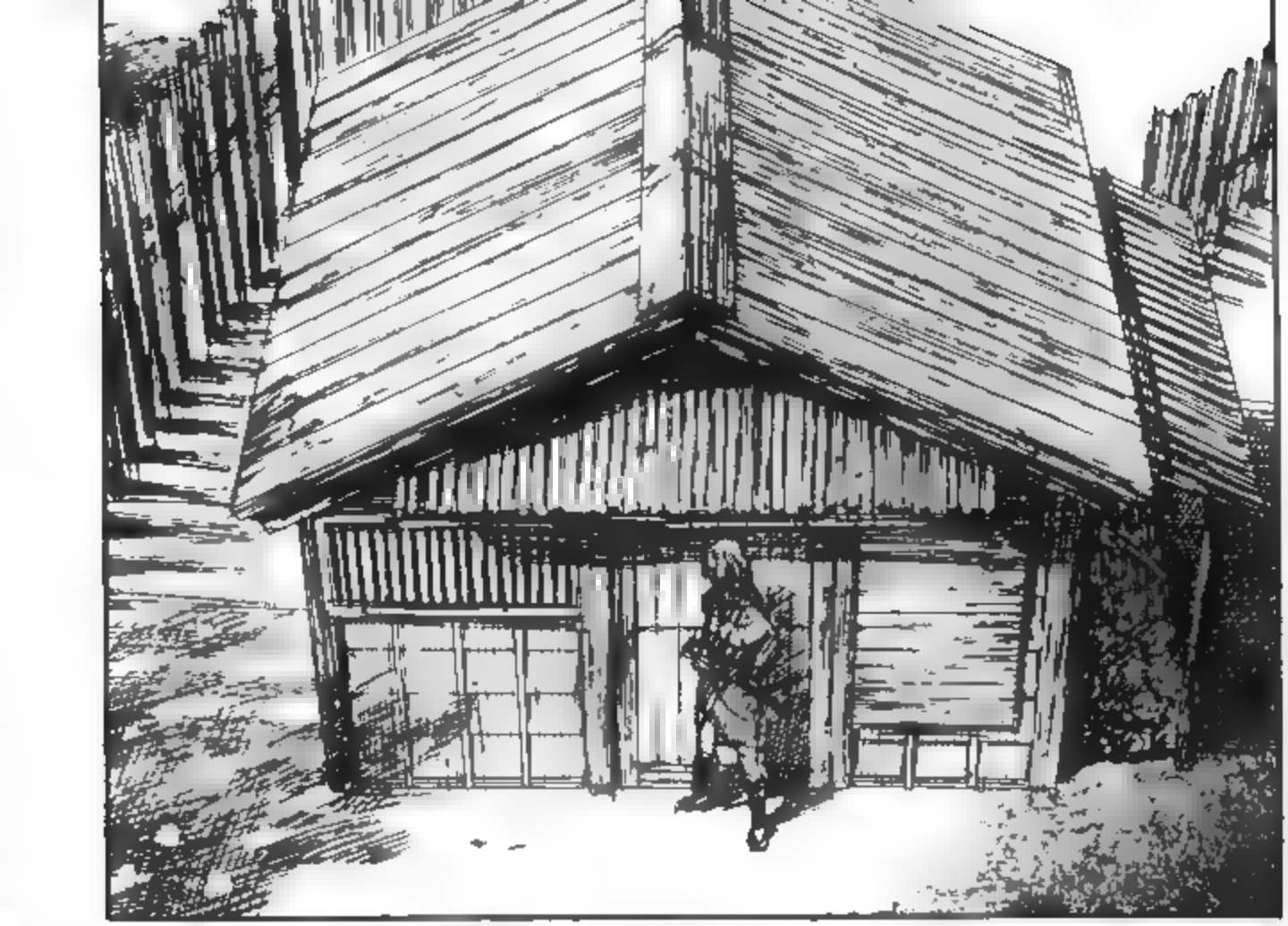
MAYBE NOT.
PERHAPS JUST... NERVES.


SPLESH!

YOU TAKIN' A WHIZ, TOO?

MM.
YOU'LL BE ALONE HERE... WATCH THE WOMAN.

YEAH, SURE.



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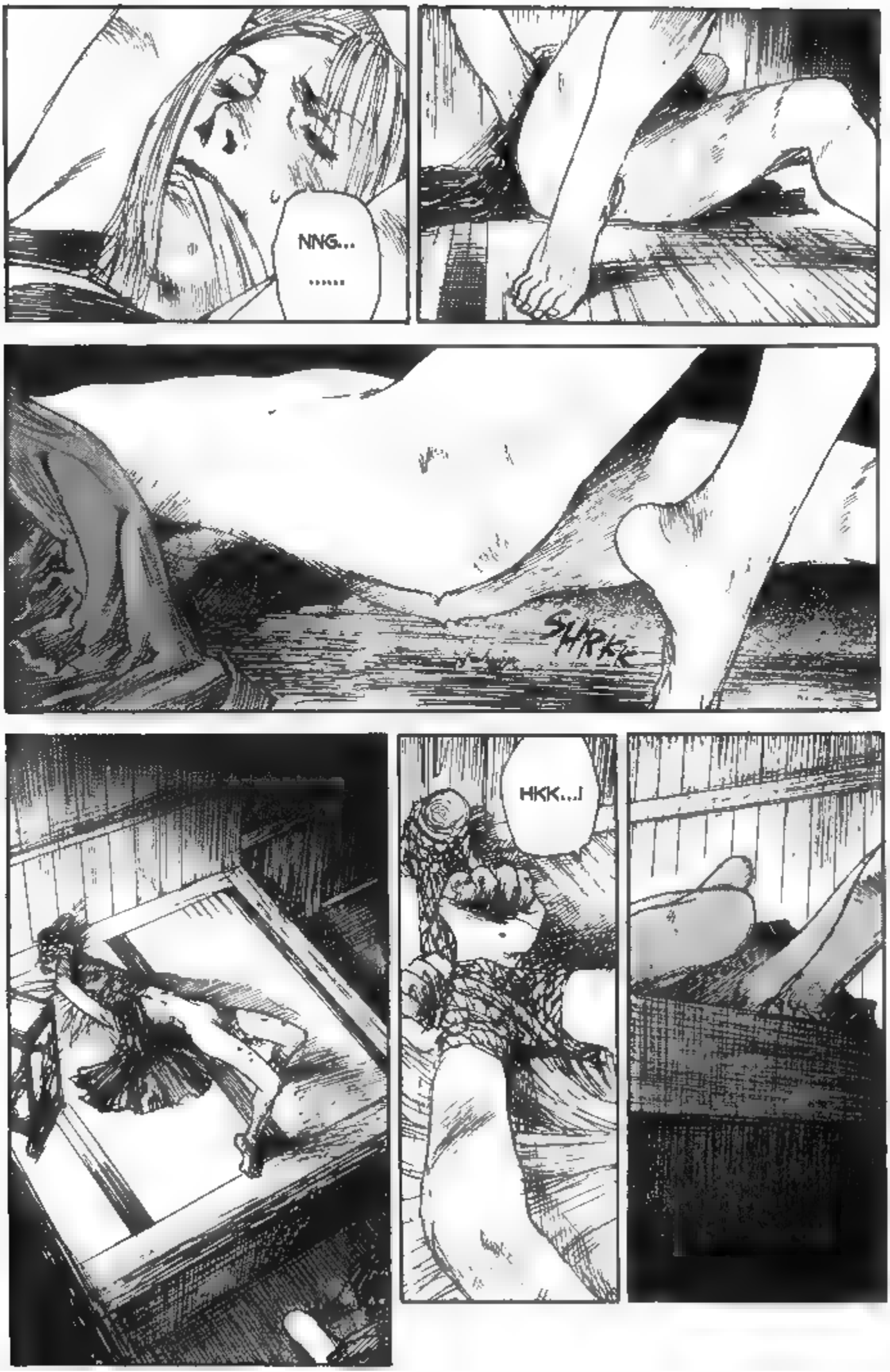
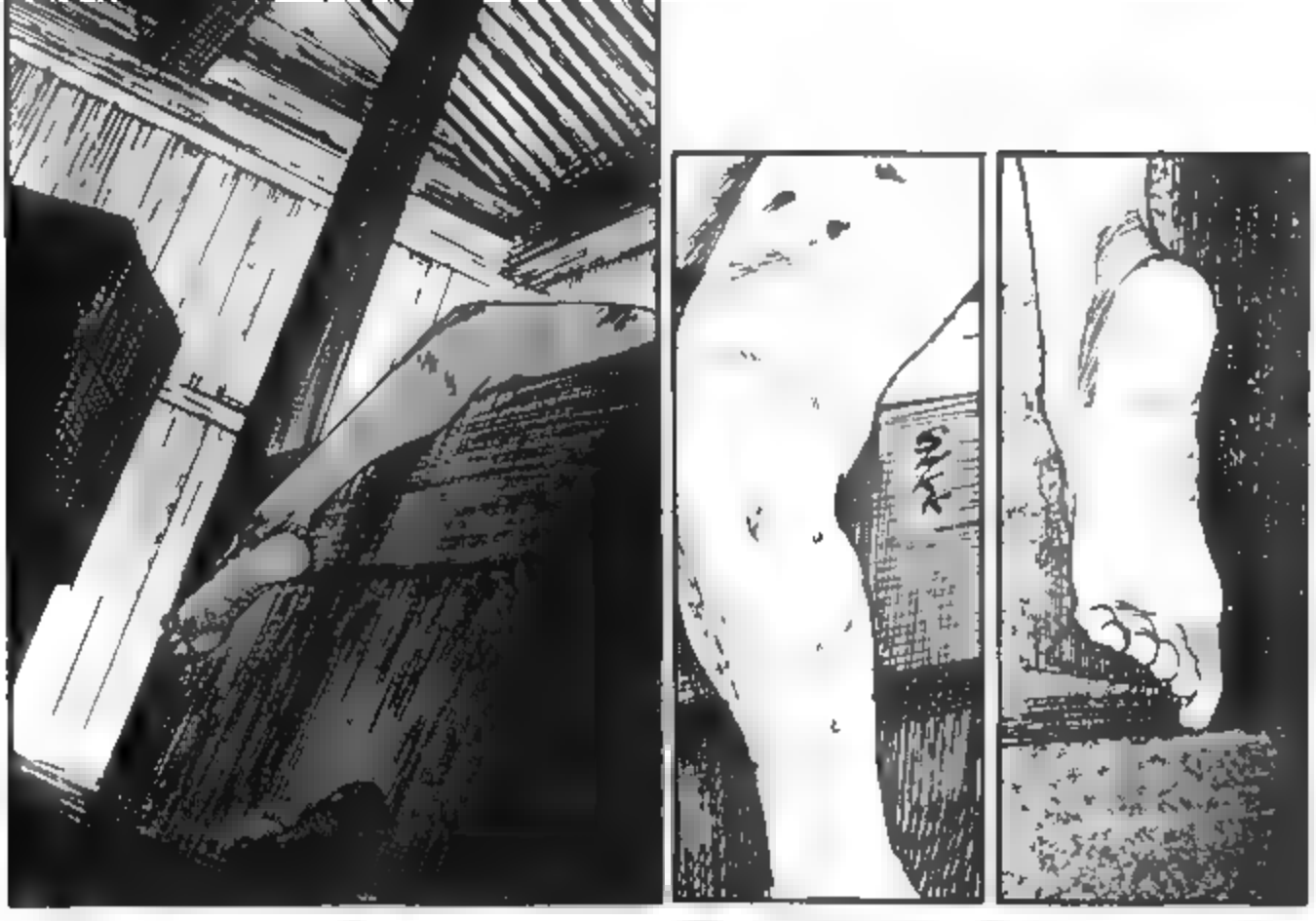
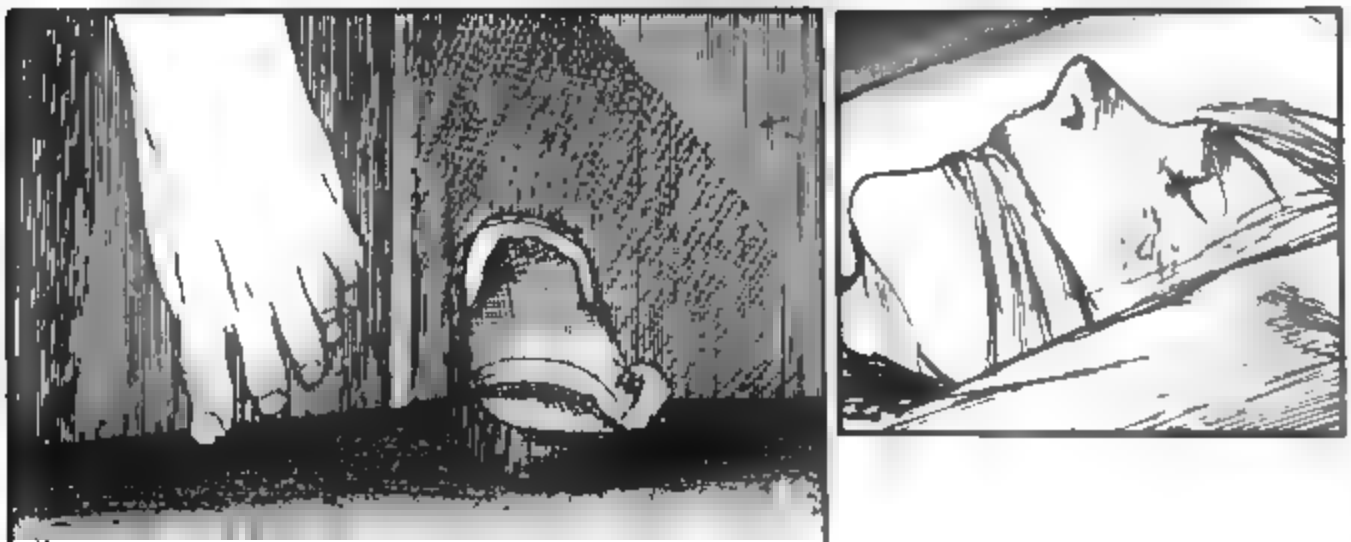
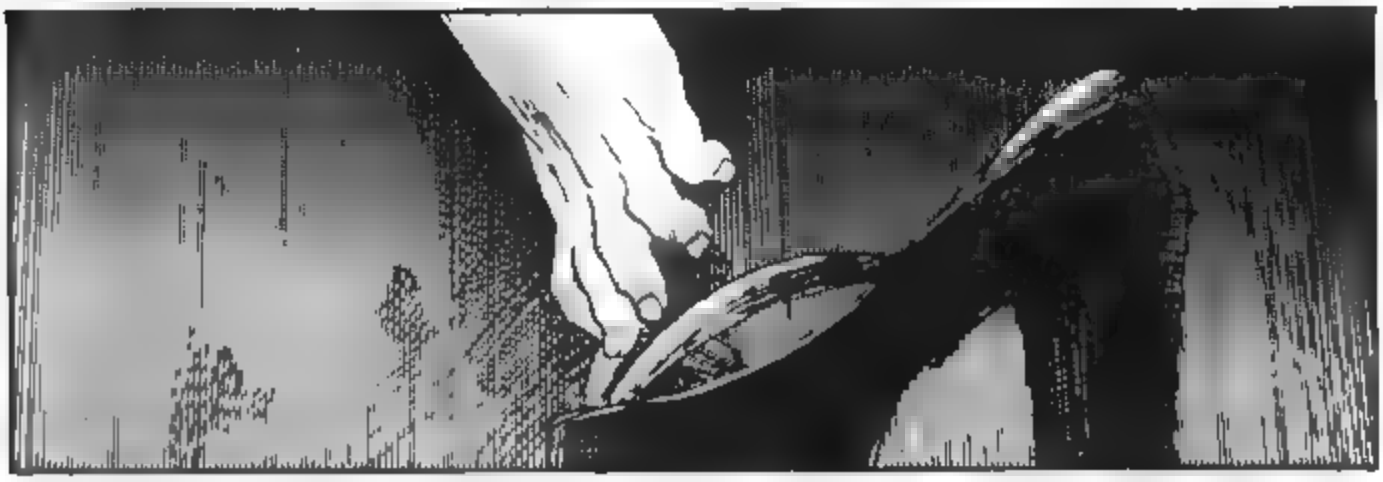
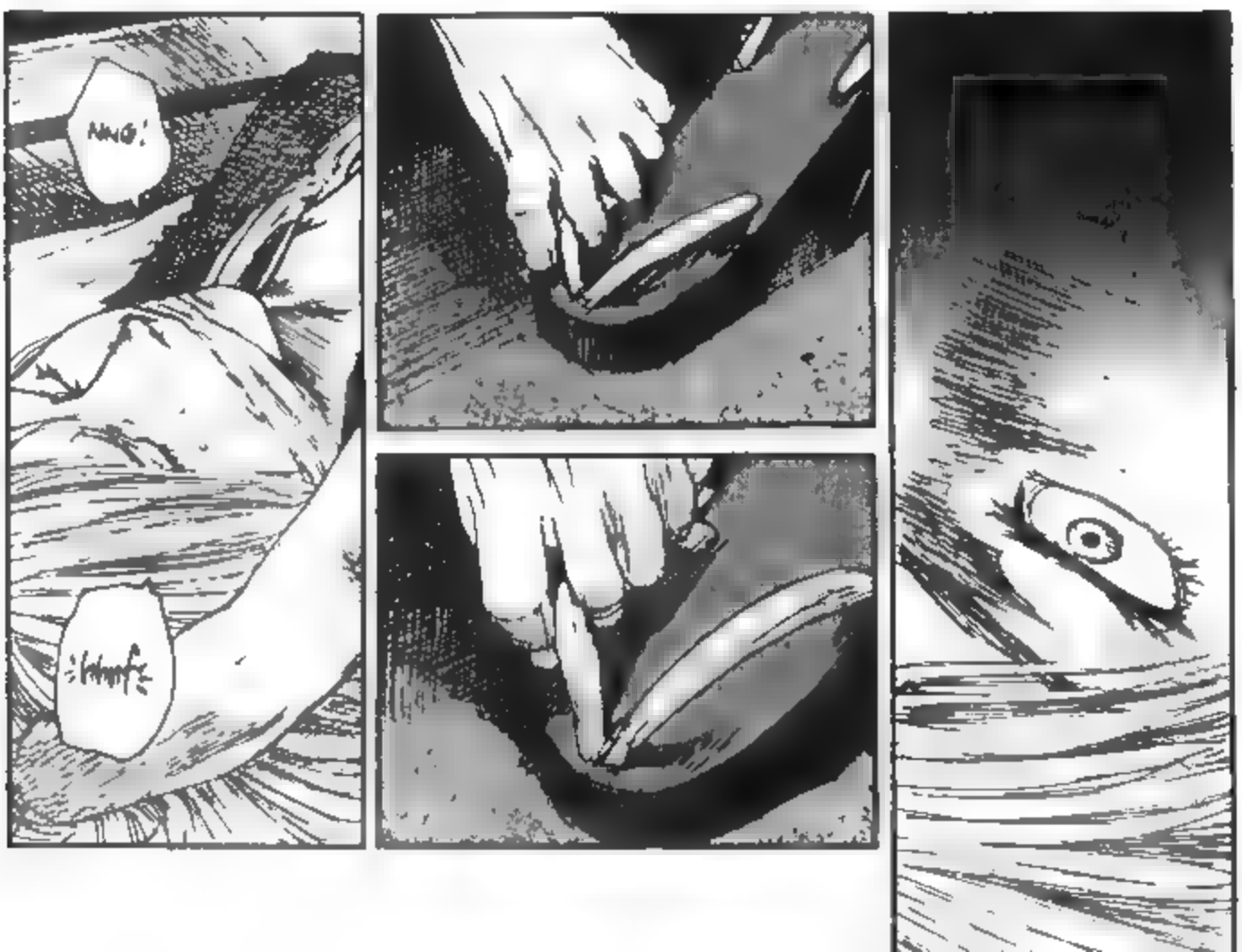
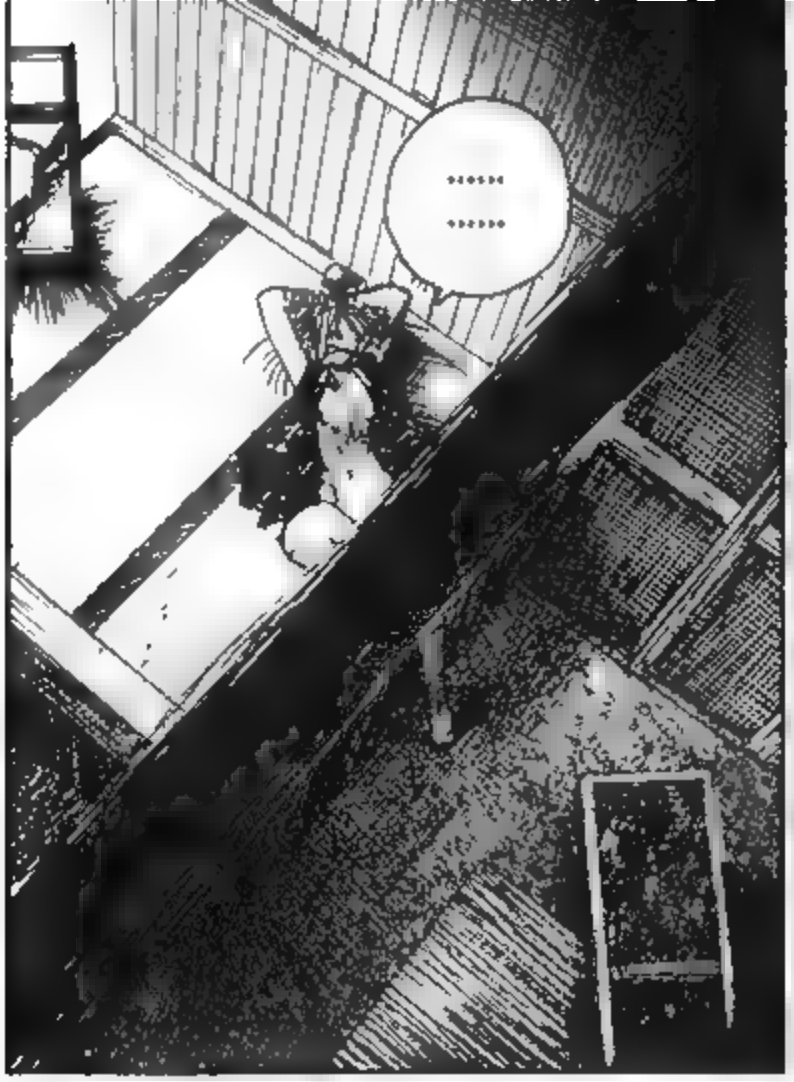

NNG...
.....
SHRK-
HKK...!








NNG!
Hmf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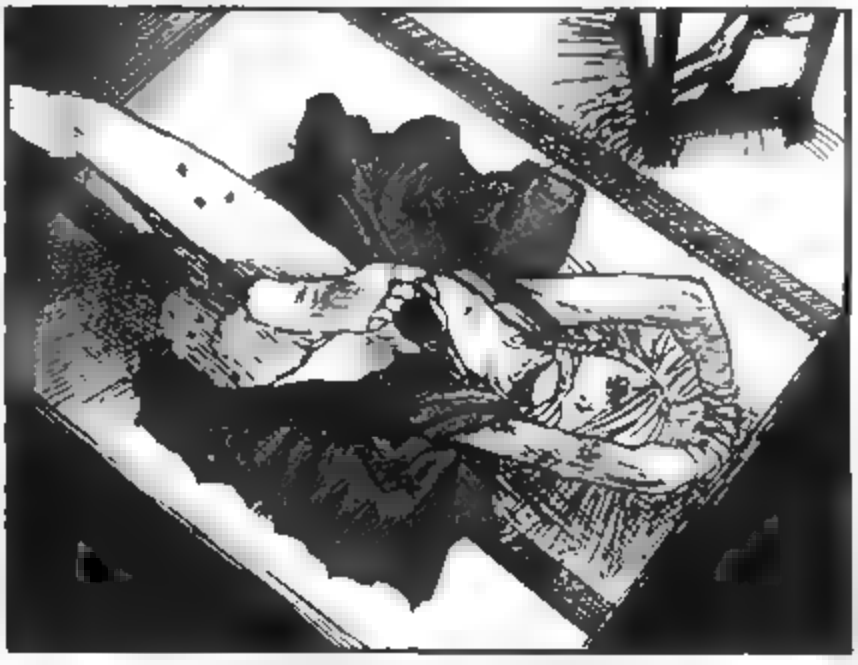
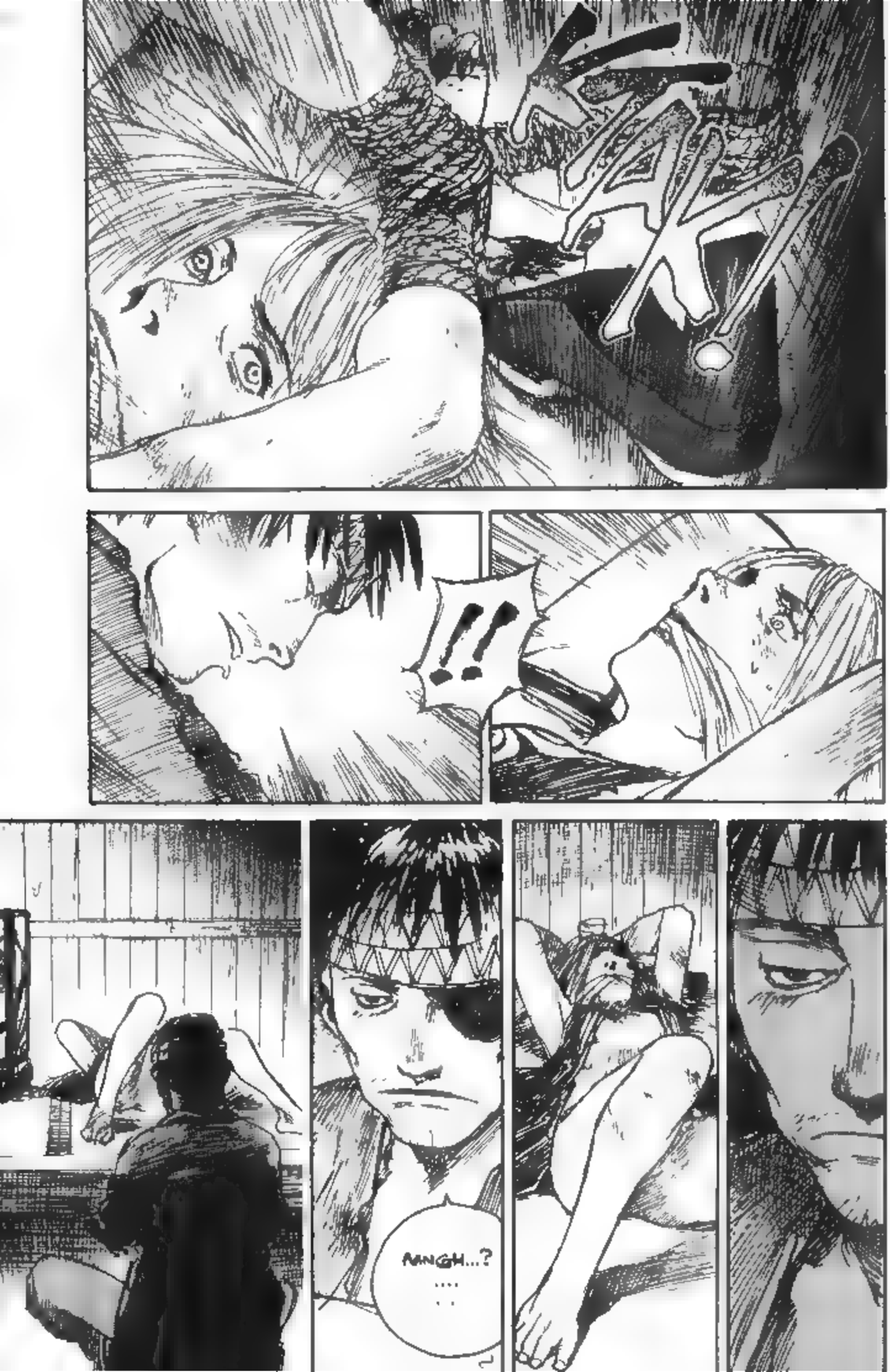
FUFU

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MNGH...?
....
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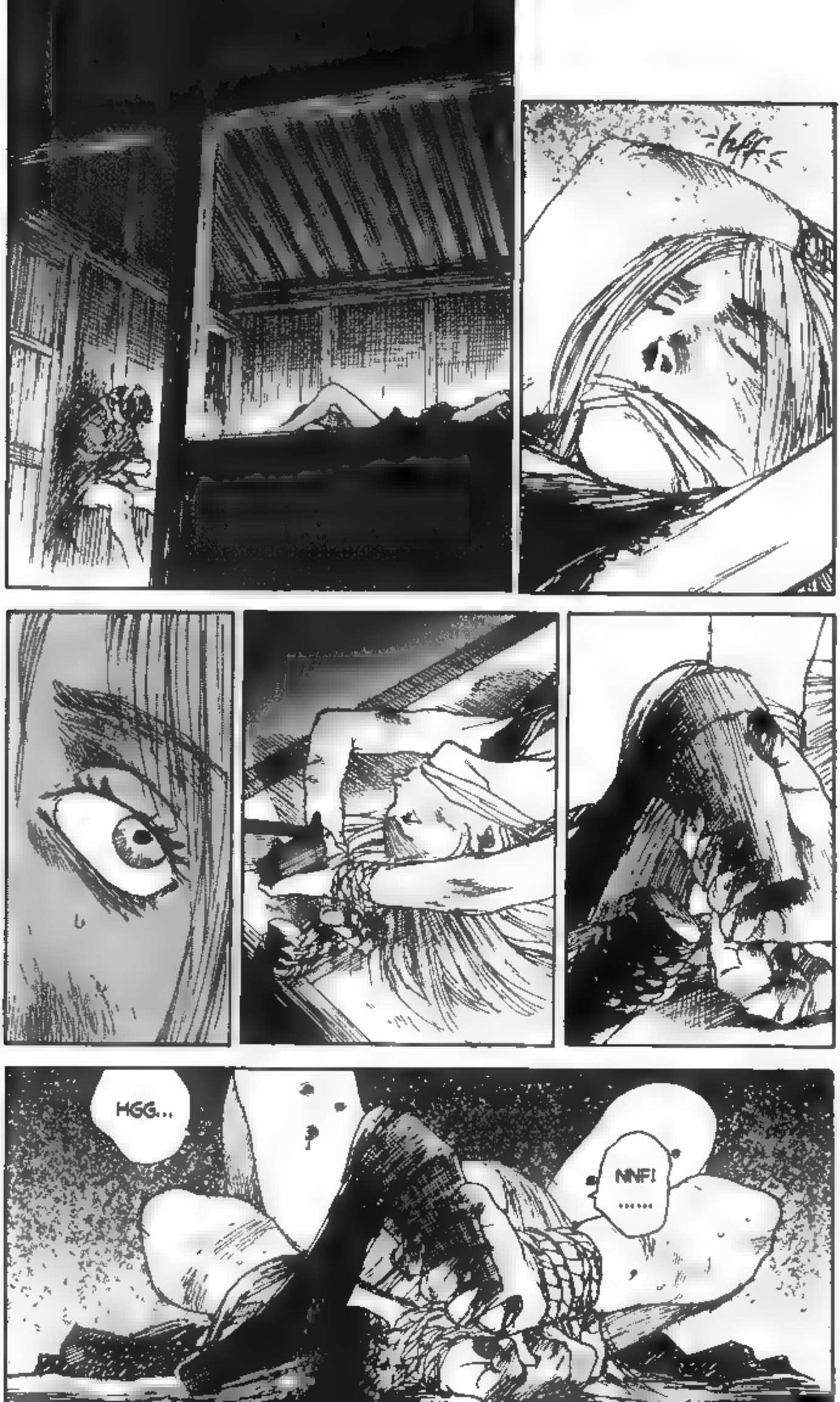
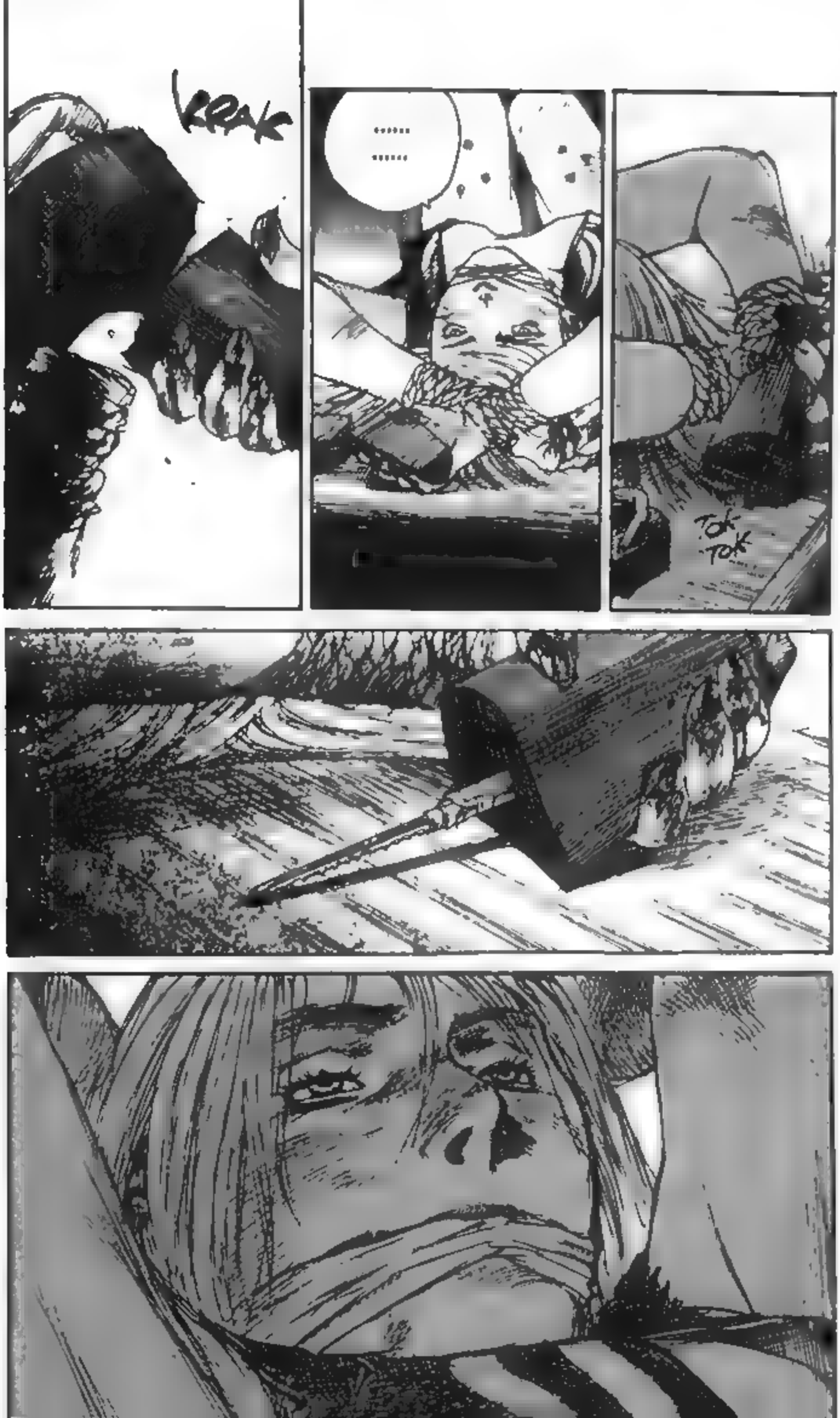
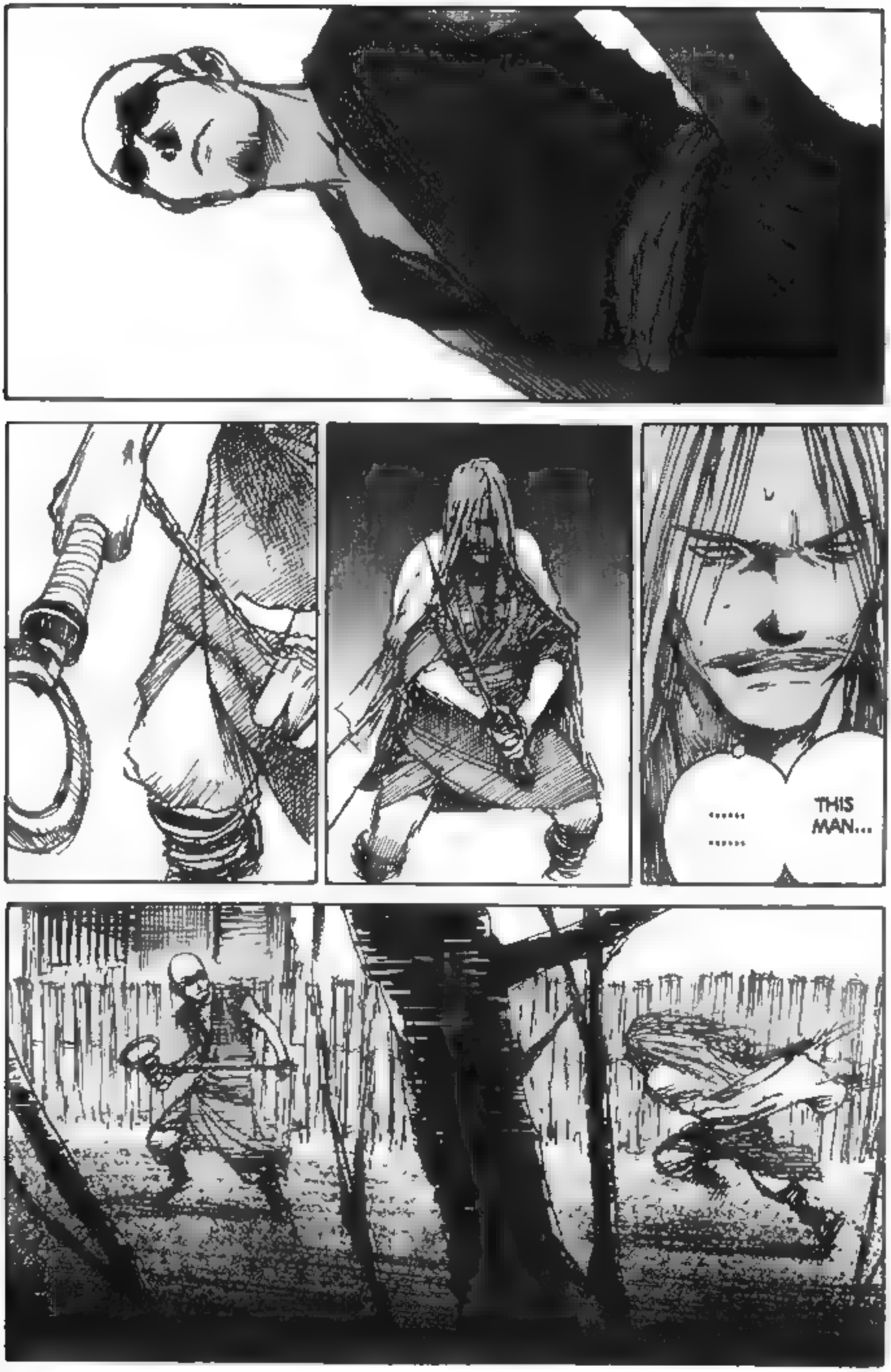
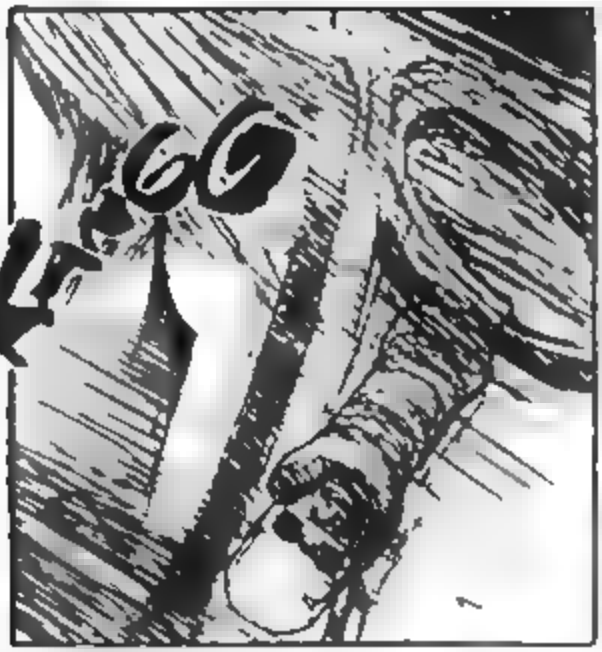

huff
HGG...
NNF!
.....


KRAK
TOK
TOK


.....
.....
THIS MAN...

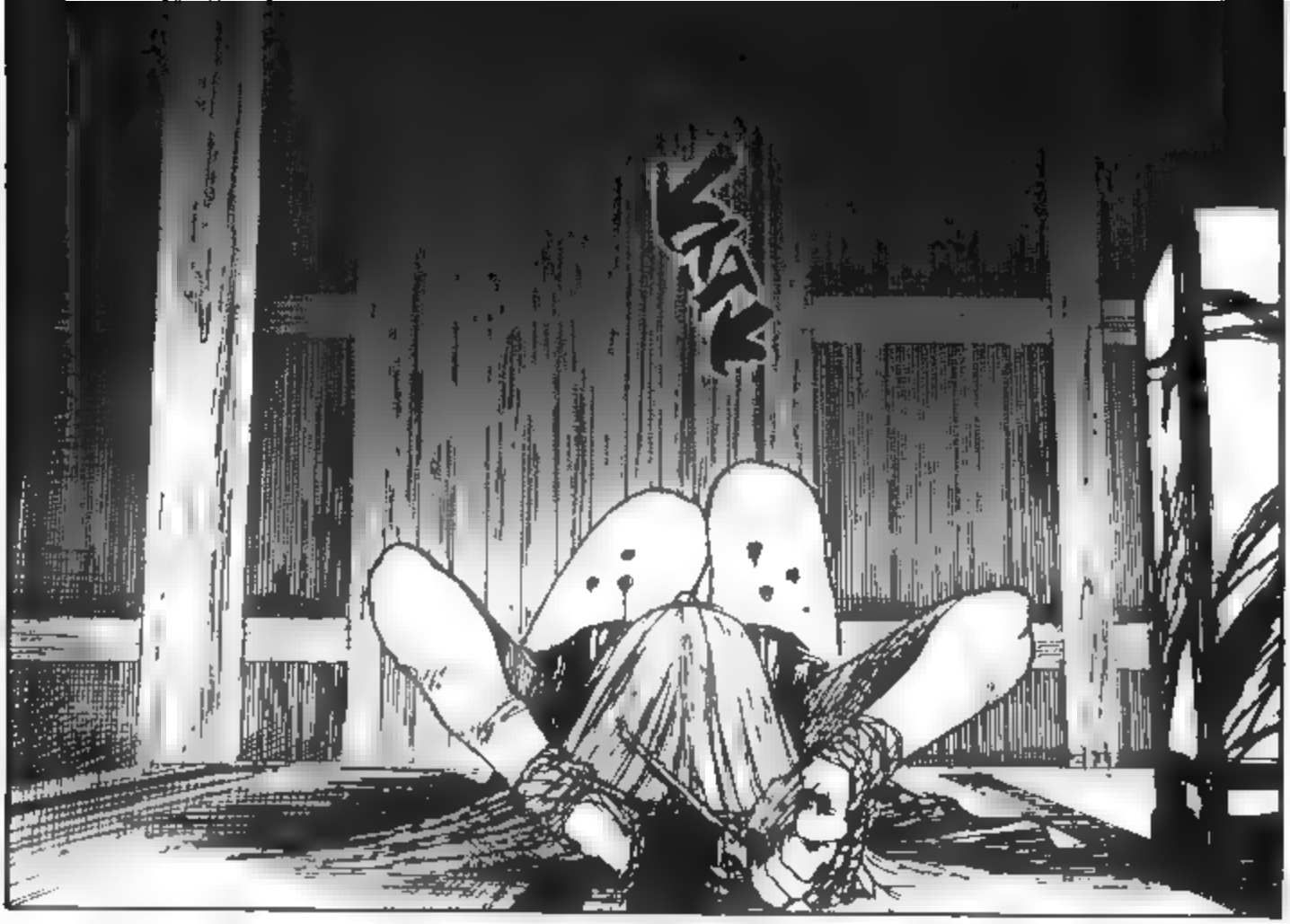

NO

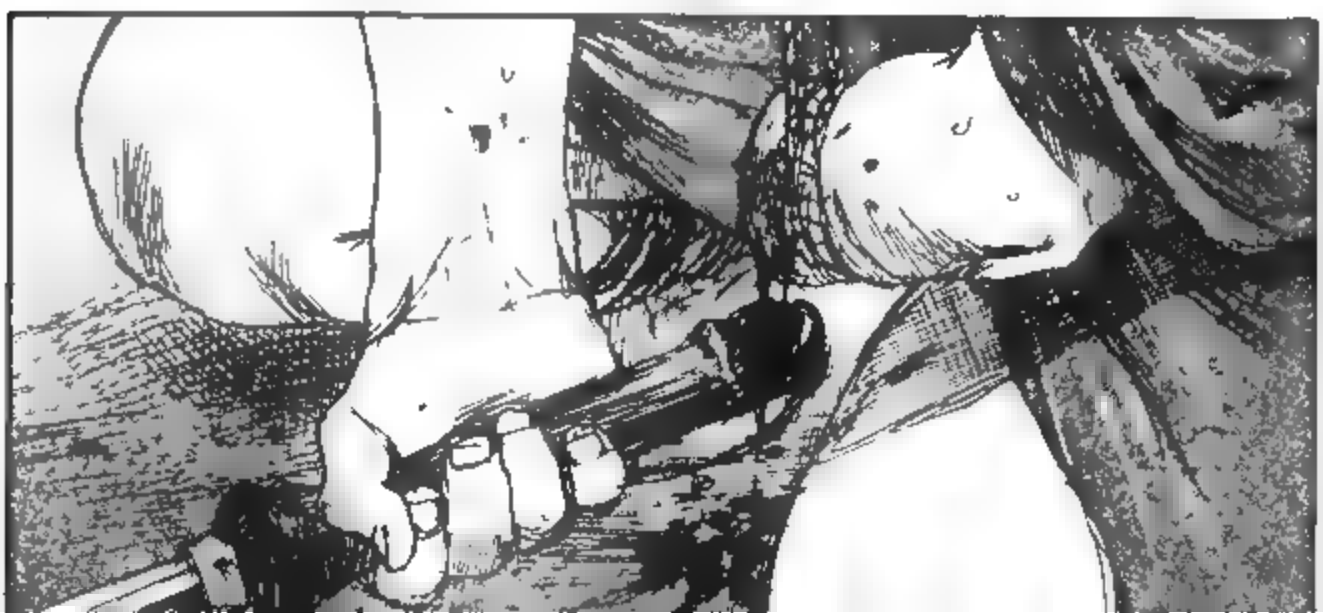
FWAK

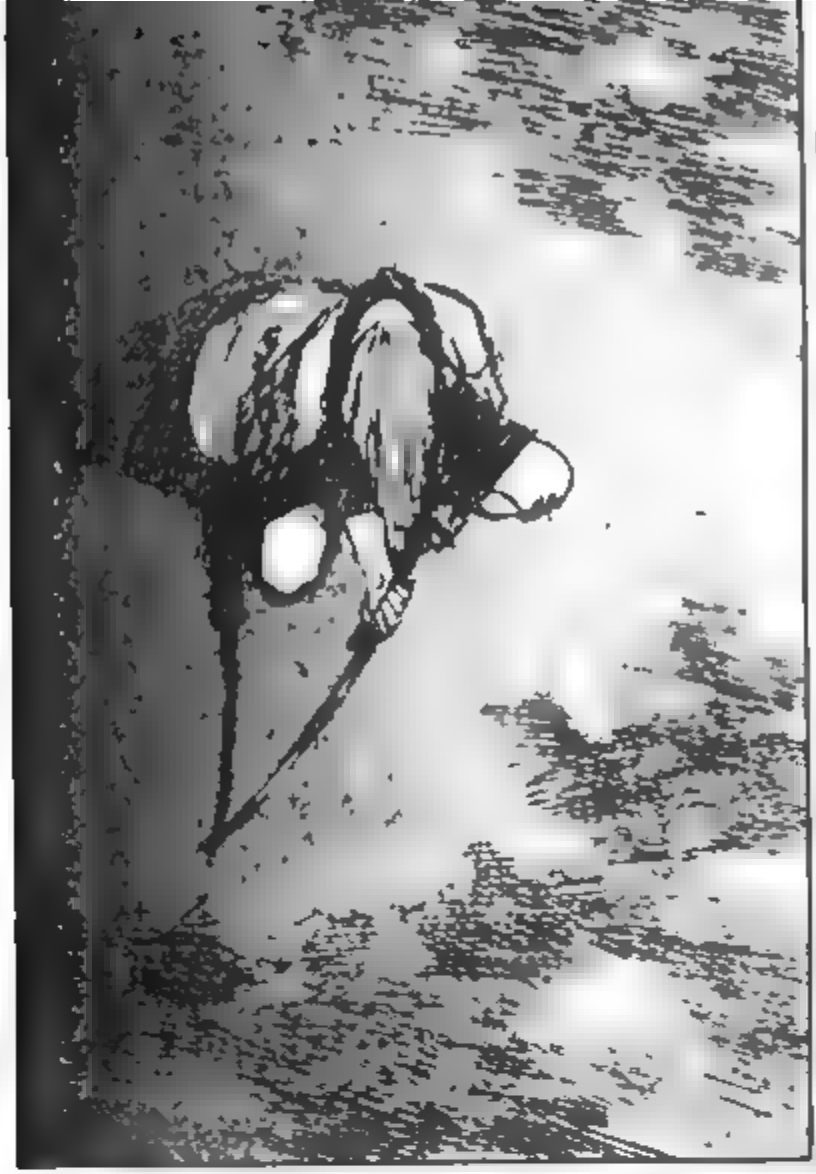
SHACK
HNG!
FAP
!!
I'LL GIVE YOU MY ARM--
--IN TRADE FOR YOUR HEAD!

SHICK
WHA--?!
IMPOSS--

?!
WHAT THE FUCK?!
N... NO WAY...
.....
.....
YOU BETTER NOT GET YOUR ASS *KILLED*, KINUKA!


KNK





HUNG
HUHH

KIIIYA!
STAY OUT OF THIS, TAMA-SAKI!
AN ARM, A LEG... IT'S OUR PRIDE AS ITTO-RYU--
--TO FIGHT ALONE!

WHAT MATTERS IS...
IT... IT MAY BE...
...THAT I WILL BE DEFEATED HERE. SO BE IT!
...THE BLADE POINTS NEXT AT YOU!
AND IF I CAN'T DEFEAT HIM... YOU HAVE NO CHANCE!
DON'T EVEN THINK OF IT.
GO... TO THE MUKŌJIMA DŌJŌ.
AND BRING BACK ABAYAMA SŌSUKE-DONO!
THE OLD MAN'S OUR ONLY CHANCE.
UNDER-STAND?!
NOW GO!
I'LL HOLD THE LINE!

SH...
SHIT...
.....
OKAY.
KIMURA!
I'LL BE BACK IN HALF AN HOUR!
DON'T DIE ON ME, MAN!
!

AH,
SHIT!
URYAHH!

SHAK

I AM YOUR OPPONENT... AND I AM STILL ALIVE!!

HALT!
OUR BATTLE IS NOT YET OVER!

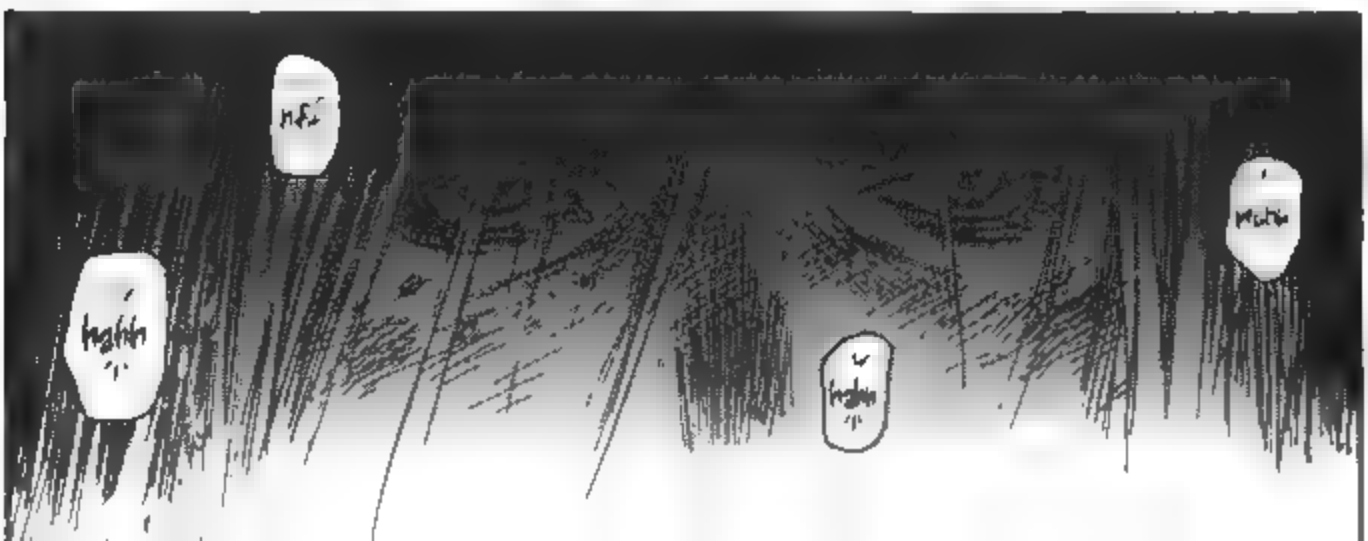
OH
K...
KIMIKO?
...?!

-huhh-
-hff-
-hahh-
-mhhh-
-hahhh-

THANKS A LOT...
...YOU ASS-HOLE!
HEH, HEH... JUST TWO DAYS...
EIGHT OF US IN TWO DAYS!
NO WAY...

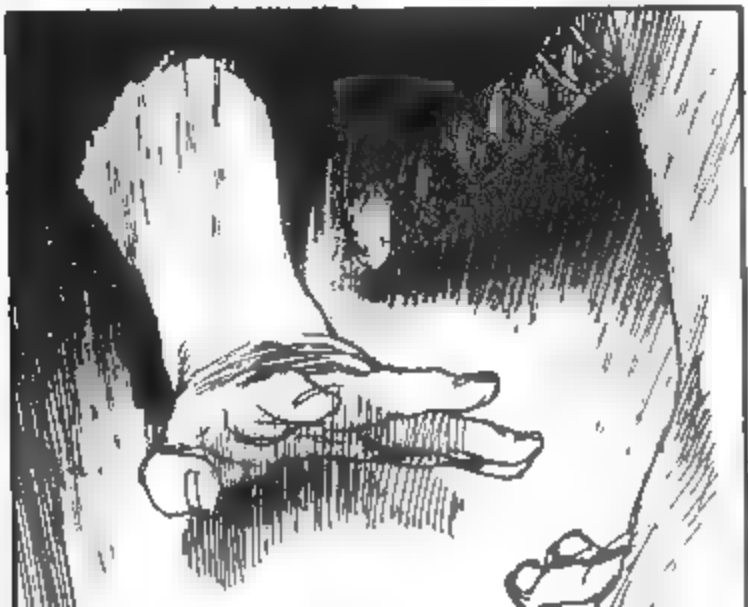
TOO MUCH KILLING, YOU BASTARDS!
NO WAY THIS EVENS OUT!!
HEH... I'M NOT DUMB.
I KNOW I'M NOT WALKING AWAY FROM THIS.
BUT LUCK, MAN...
LUCK SMILED ON ME ONE WAY--
--YOU STILL HAVEN'T RESCUED YOUR BITCH.
NO YOU DON'T! DON'T MOVE!

FIRST WE GOTTA BET.
FROM WHERE YOU'RE STANDING, CAN YOU TAKE MY HEAD OFF...
...BEFORE I PLANT MY SWORD IN SLEEPING BEAUTY'S HEART?!
.....
.....
HEH, HEH... DON'T THINK SO, DO YA, PAL? DO YA?!
SO WHY DON'T YA JUST RUN ON BACK TO YOUR BOSS AND--
SHAKK



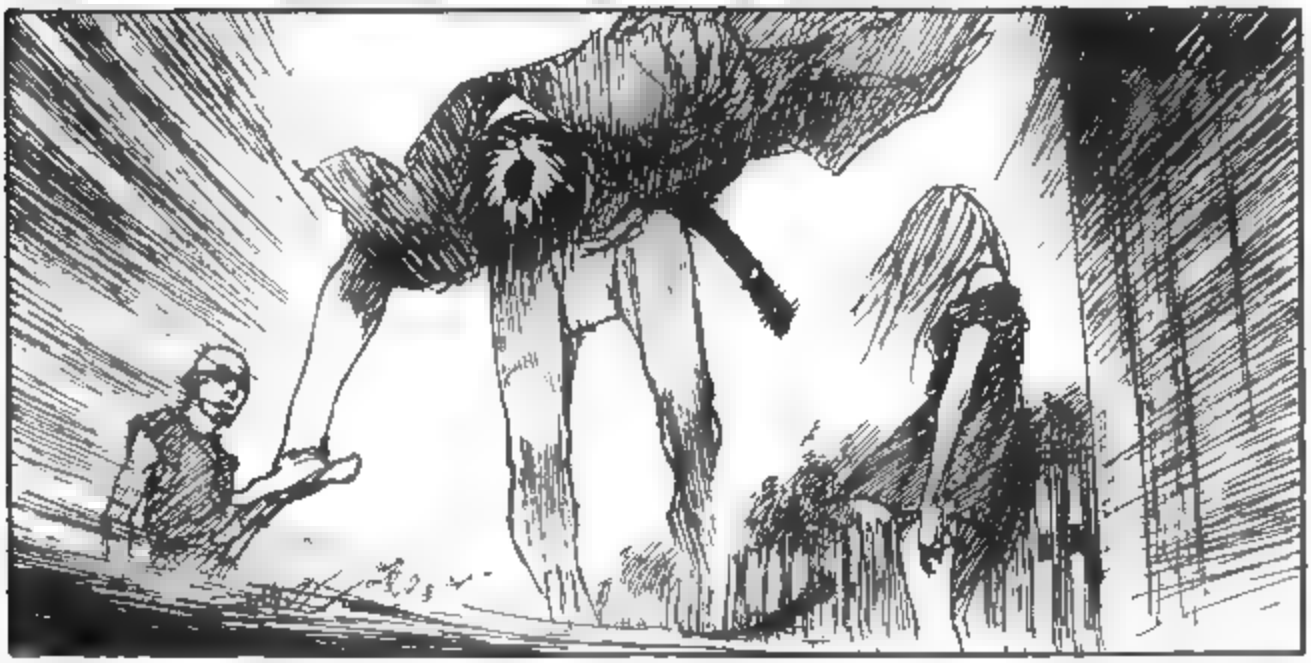
H-HOLY SHIT...!
WHA... WHAT THE... .....
HOW... HOW... .....

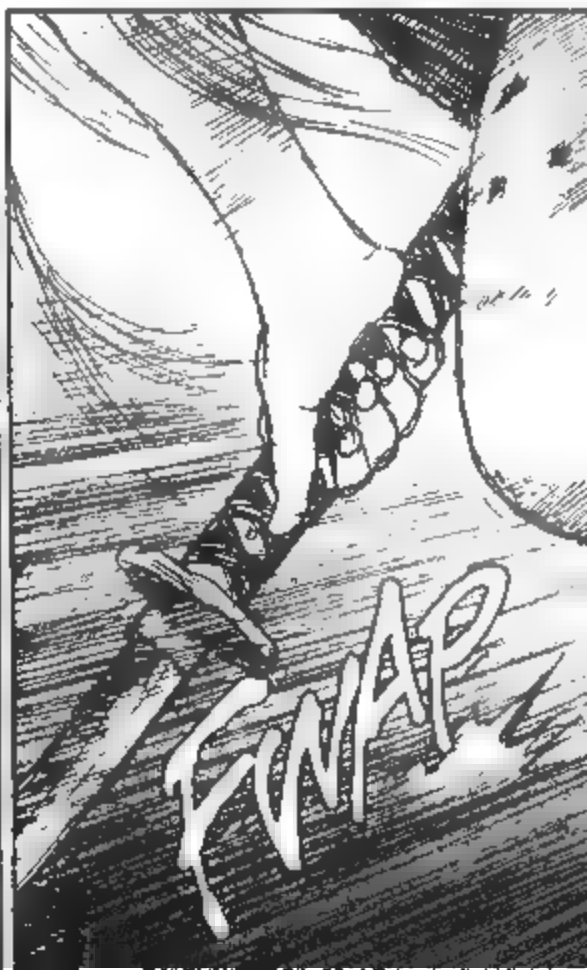
FUCK IT!! YEAH!! BRING IT ON!!
NOW WE'RE EVEN, BITCH!
ONE ARM EACH!!
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!!



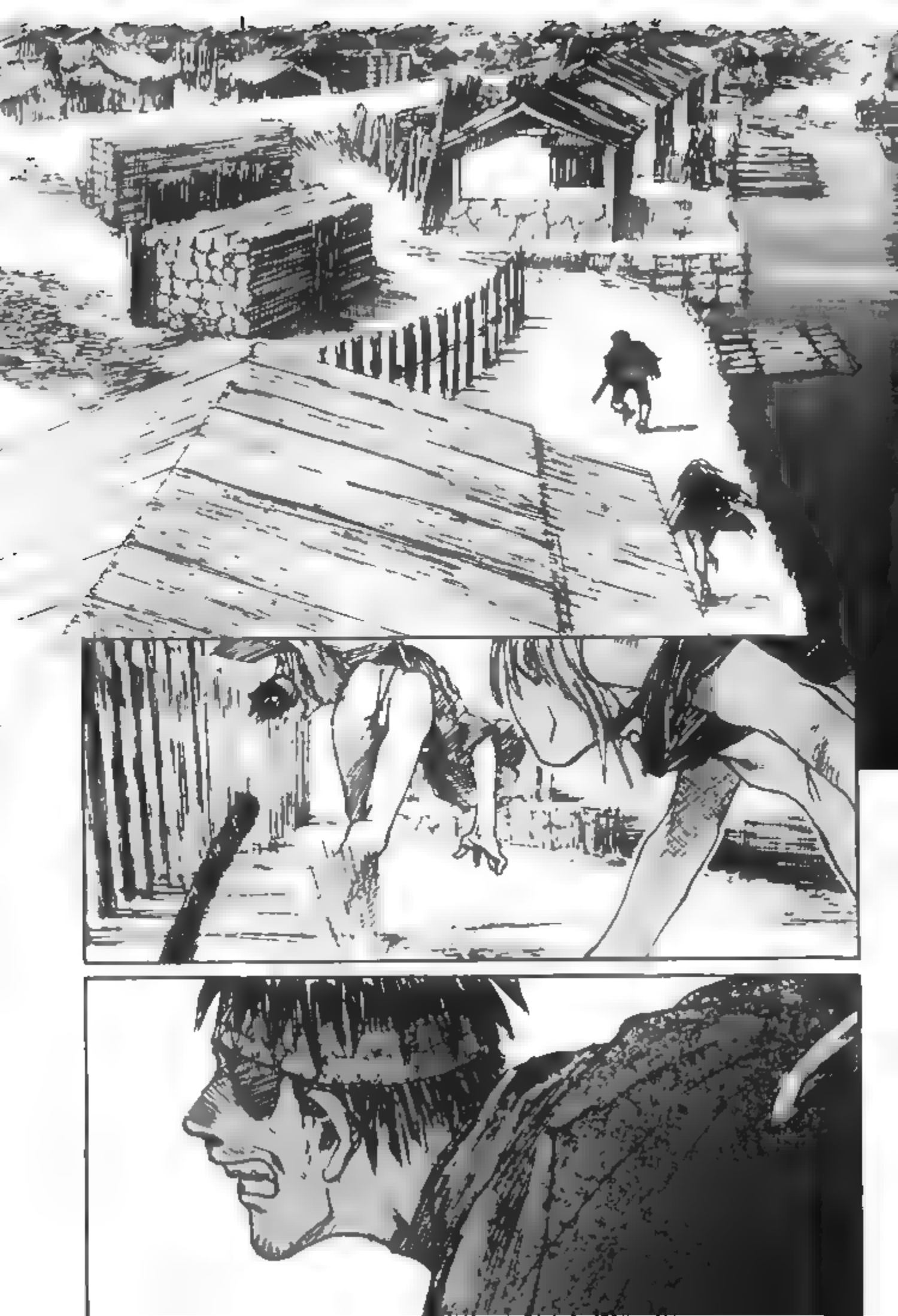
Ah.

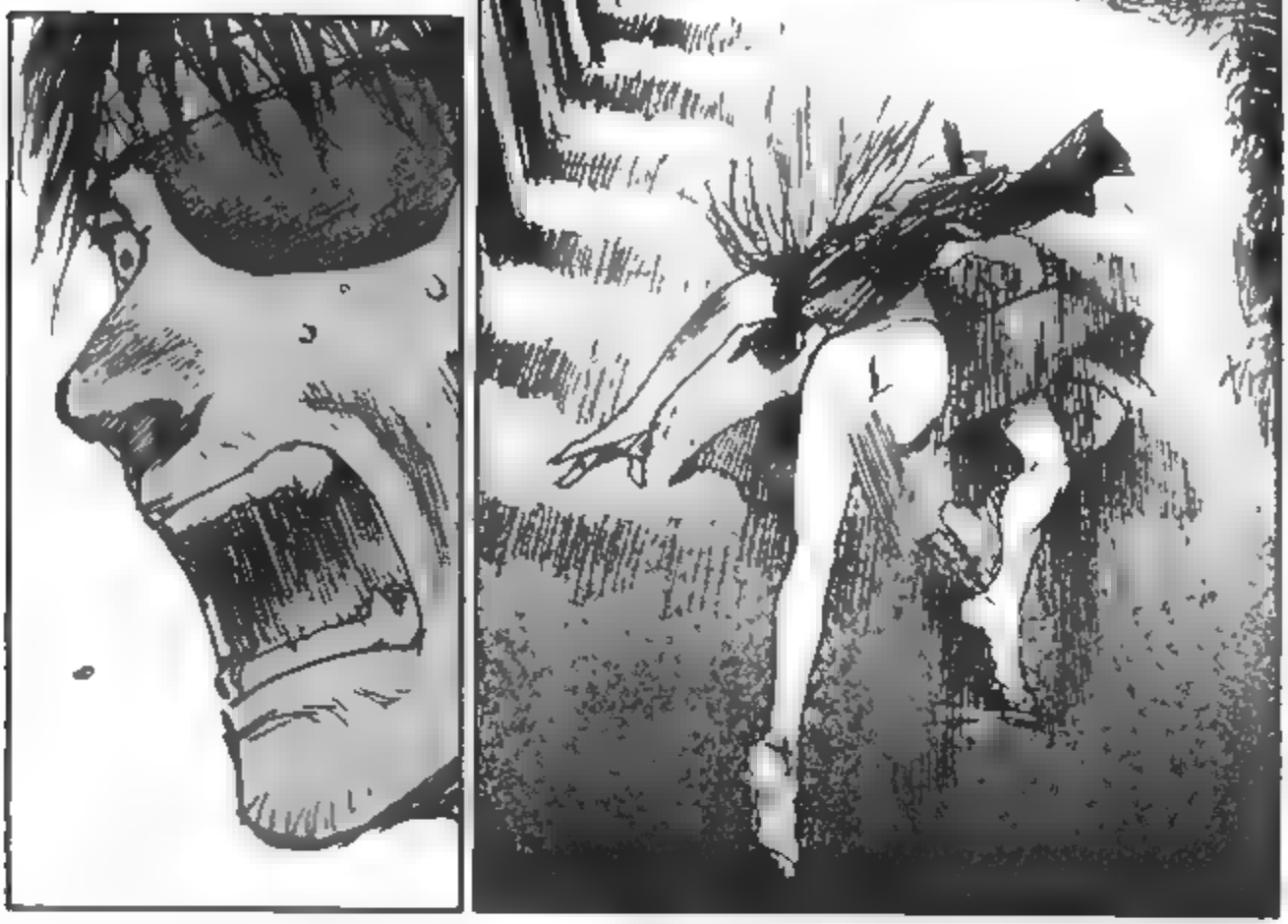
CHINK
NO... NOW WE'RE EVEN.
HEH, HEH




FWAP

DON'T YOU FUCKING DARE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!!





BEASTS
Part 5

MATSU-
HIKO!
MATSU-
HIKO...?!
OH!
THERE
YOU
ARE!
D-DON'T
LOOK,
MOTHER!

SWEETHEART, WHAT ARE YOU--OH! YOU'RE LIKE ICE! I WISH THAT MAN WOULD SHOW SOME RESTRAINT...
NO... IT'S NOT FATHER'S FAULT-- I WANT HIM TO BE HARD ON ME.
I'M SUCH A WEAKLING. AND THIS FACE... THE BOYS SHOVE ME AROUND AND CALL ME A GIRL.
EVERY DAY I'M REMINDED THAT I'M HEIR TO THE HAYAKAWA DŌJŌ... BUT IF I TRY TO FIGHT, I JUST GET BEAT UP.
AND EVERY TIME FATHER HEARS ABOUT IT...
...HOW IT MUST HURT HIM.
NO, IF HE CAN MAKE ME STRONG...
...I'LL GLADLY DO WHATEVER HE ASKS, MOTHER.

IT'S NOT A WOMAN'S BUSINESS, O-HYAKU.
IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE MY FATHER DIED... A DISCIPLE OF IEHARU-SAMA HIMSELF! "ONE OF THE THREE GREAT SWORDMASTERS," THEY CALLED HIM! AND NOW LOOK AT US! THE DOJO CLOSED, PEOPLE CALLING ME A FRAUD BEHIND MY BACK...
WE CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A SERVANT! CAN'T YOU SEE THE STATE WE'RE IN?!
EIGHT YEARS AGO... YOU TOOK THE CHILD I'D BORNE, MATSUHIKO'S TWIN SISTER...
...AND KILLED HER! "I HAVE NO TIME TO RAISE GIRLS," YOU SAID! YOU DIDN'T EVEN NAME HER!
I'VE ENDURED [redacted] ENDURED.. ALL FOR MATSU-HIKO.
BUT TODAY I'M SPEAKING MY MIND!
YOU! [redacted] OWN FATHER!
DO YOU WANT TO CRIPPLE THE BOY FOR-EVER?!

IF HE'S GOING TO WITHER AWAY IN A CRUMBLING HOUSE WITHOUT SAVING OUR DŌJŌ...
...THEN, YES-- I MIGHT AS WELL CRIPPLE HIM!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
GET UP! YOU'RE NOT LEAVING THIS GARDEN UNTIL YOU'RE FINISHED!
.....
GOOD!
LISTEN, MATSUI THE THING YOU LACK MOST OF ALL IS MUSCLE!
IF YOU CAN'T DO A HUNDRED STROKES...
...YOU'LL NEVER CONTROL A SWORD!

ARE YOU MAD?!
WHAT CHILD ANYWHERE CAN SWING A WEIGHTED PRACTICE SWORD A HUNDRED TIMES?! ESPECIALLY HIM!
N-NO... I CAN DO IT... MOTHER.
.....
.....

MATSU-HIKO!
HAK
koff
koff
H-HE'S COUGHING UP BLOOD!
.....
.....
IT...
IT'S NOPELESS, ISN'T IT.
HOPE-LESS.

SO, MATSU-HIKO...
MY DEPARTED FIRST WIFE GAVE ME TWO SONS.
WHEN I REALIZED THEY BOTH HAD THE SAME SICK LUNGS...
IT SEEMS...
...YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THE ILLNESS, EITHER.
...I FELT I HAD TO END THEIR LIVES. BY MY OWN HAND! THAT FEELING...
MY FEELING! CAN'T YOU UNDER-STAND?!
MATSU-HIKO...
...ACCEPT THIS.

??
AH!
HUSBAND!
NO!
DON'T--
NH
CHOK

KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF

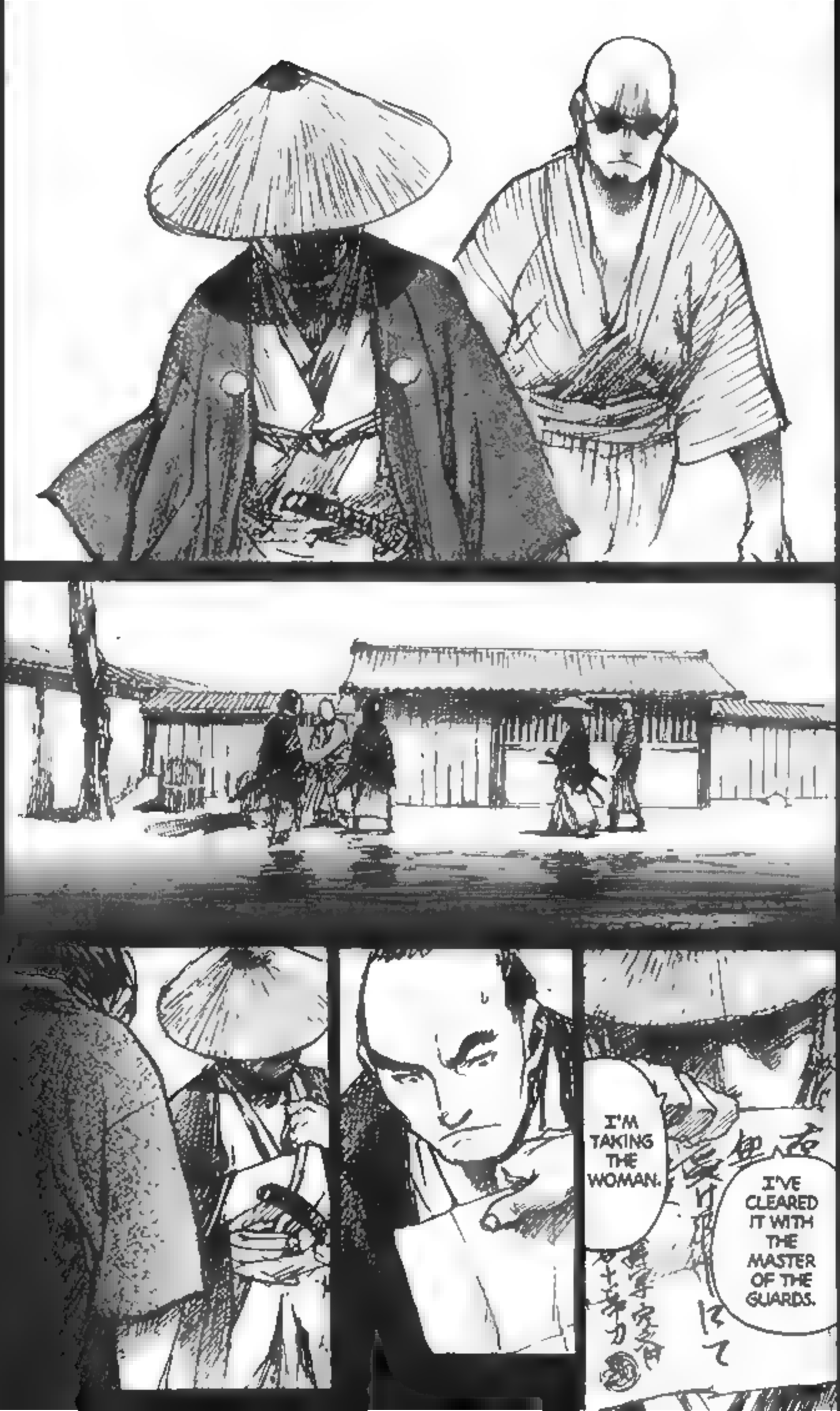
O-HYAKU...
:kotf:
I'LL JUST... HAVE YOU BEAR ANOTHER...
KAKŌSAI...?
IT'S ME! I BROUGHT YOUR PAINT-ING...
OH, WELL...

IT WOULDN'T COME OUT...
MY LITTLE BOY'S... BLOOD...
.....
.....
OH... THE BLOOD..?

HYAKU!
WIFE OF
HAYAKAWA
KAKŌSAI
GENKEI!
AGE,
TWENTY-
SIX!

IF YOU HAVE ANY LAST WORDS, SPEAK NOW!
ME...
.....
.....
ME... AND MY BOY... TOO...
LITTLE BOY... DEAD BOY... JUST EIGHT YEARS ON EARTH...
.....
.....
WHY... WHY AM I HERE...?
DID I DO SOME-THING... WRONG?
...HE PLANNED IT...YES... RIGHT FROM THE START.
HIS OWN... CHILD...

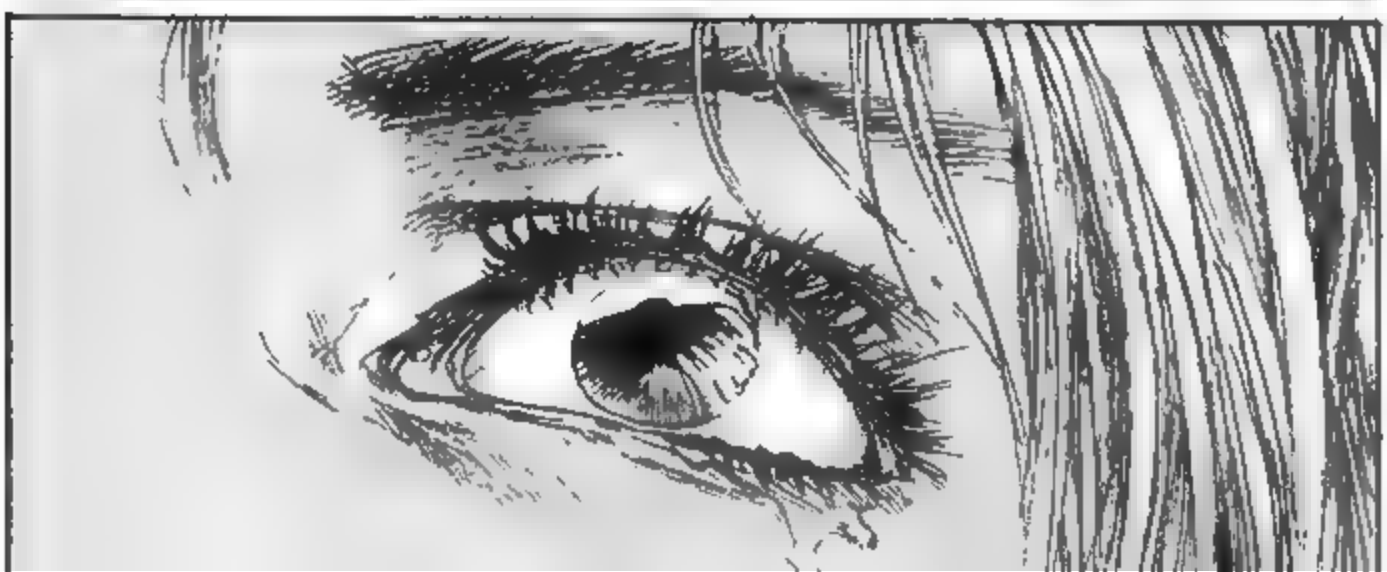
.....
ALL RIGHT.
TH... THAT'S ENOUGH. DO IT.
Y-YES, SIR.
HOLD!
AH?!
OH! IT'S YOU, SIR!


I'M TAKING THE WOMAN.
I'VE CLEARED IT WITH THE MASTER OF THE GUARDS.

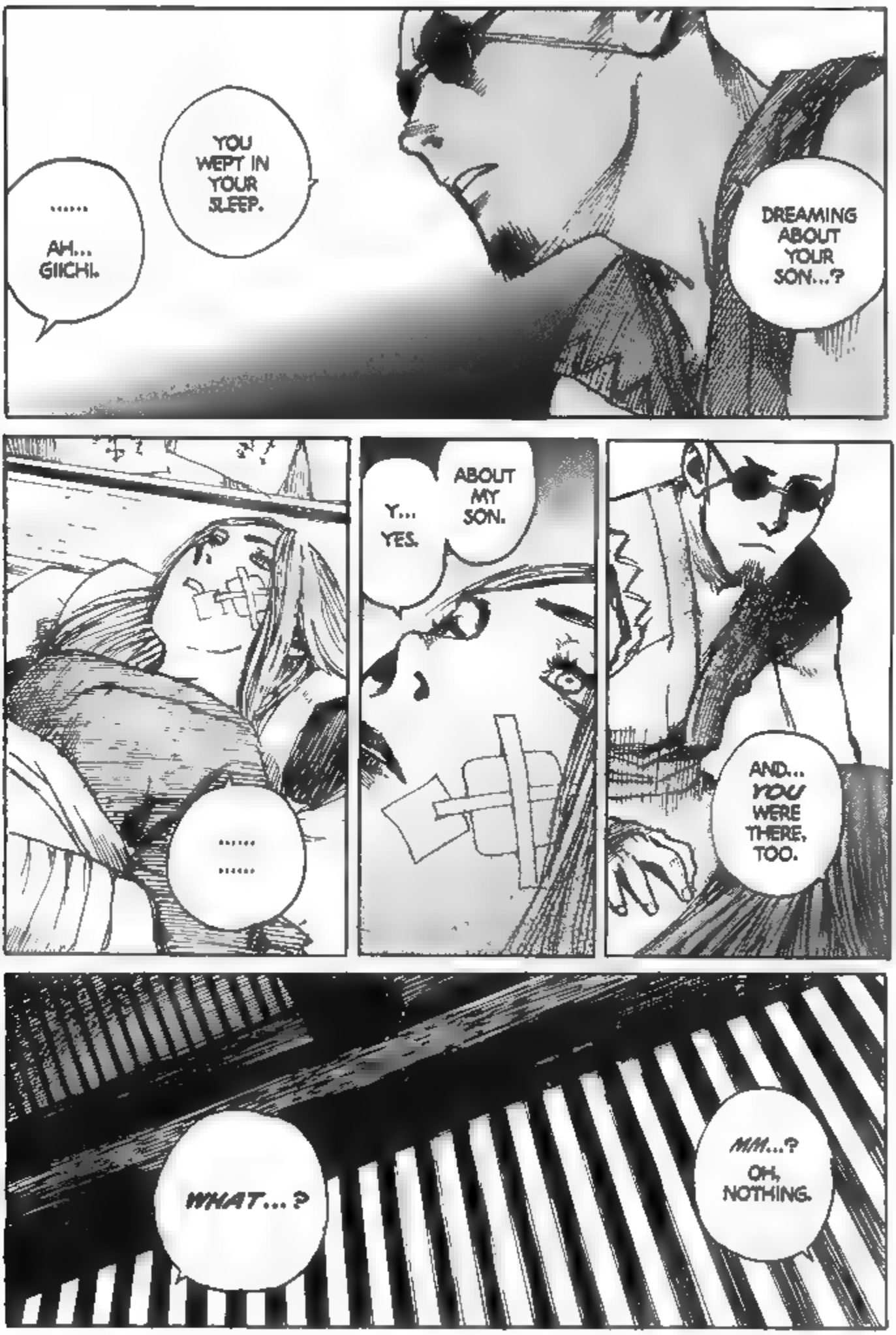
YES, SIR.
EVERY-THING SEEMS IN ORDER, SIR...
BUT... BUT WHAT ON EARTH CAN ONE WOMAN DO FOR YOU...?
THERE ARE JOBS ONLY A WOMAN CAN DO, GENTLEMEN.
AND BESIDES...
...DAMNED GUTSY, DON'T YOU THINK? UNTRAINED, AND YET SHE TOOK ON HER HUSBAND, A MASTER OF THE SWORD.
I'VE BEEN FRIENDS WITH YOUR HOUSEHOLD... THE HAYAKAWAS...
...FOR TWO GENERA-TIONS.

GENKEI WAS AN OLD-FASHIONED MAN.
OBSESSED BY HIS FATHER'S SHADOW, HE STILL THOUGHT HE COULD WIN FAME BY THE *SWORD!* IN *THIS* WORLD? A WORLD OF HUNDRED AND FIFTY *YEARS* OF PEACE SINCE THE SHIMABARA UPRISING? THE *FOOL.*
IF HE HADN'T *DISCIPLINED* HIS FRAIL CHILD LIKE THAT, IF HE'D JUST *APPRENTICED* HIM, ENROLLED HIM IN *SCHOOL...*
THIS FOOLISH TRAGEDY NEED NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.
DON'T HATE *ALL* SAMURAI. *THEY'RE* NOT YOUR ENEMY.
BUT THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THIS NEW WORLD.
THEY RUN *BLINDLY* AFTER THE *SWORD.* INEXPLICABLE.
IN FACT... THERE'S ONE *HERE.* IN EDO.

WOMAN!
BY THE MERCY OF THE GO-RŌJŪ, YOU'RE ONE OF US NOW.
LISTEN WELL!
YOU DIED HERE TODAY! BUT NO CORPSE— I CALL YOU MUSAI!... THE DISEMBODIED!
THOSE YOU SHALL BATTLE ARE CALLED THE ITTŌ-RYŌ. MEN LIKE YOUR HUSBAND. LIVING BY THE SWORD! TRYING TO RE-CREATE THE WARRIORS OF OLD!
AND IN TIME, A THREAT TO THE SHŌGUNATE.
TAKE UP ARMS WITH US, NYAKU!



YOU'RE BACK WITH US...?


DREAMING ABOUT YOUR SON...?
YOU WEPT IN YOUR SLEEP.
.....
AH... GIICHI.
Y... YES.
ABOUT MY SON.
.....
.....
AND... YOU WERE THERE, TOO.
WHAT...?
MM...? OH, NOTHING.

WHERE... ARE WE?
I RENTED A ROOM ACROSS FROM CHŌKICHI'S SHOP.
"AFTER YOU SPLIT THAT LAST MAN APART... YOU COLLAPSED.
"YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPING THREE DAYS."
THREE DAYS...
BANDAGES... MY ARM... DID YOU DO THIS FOR ME, GIICHI?
YES.
I WASHED YOU AS WELL.

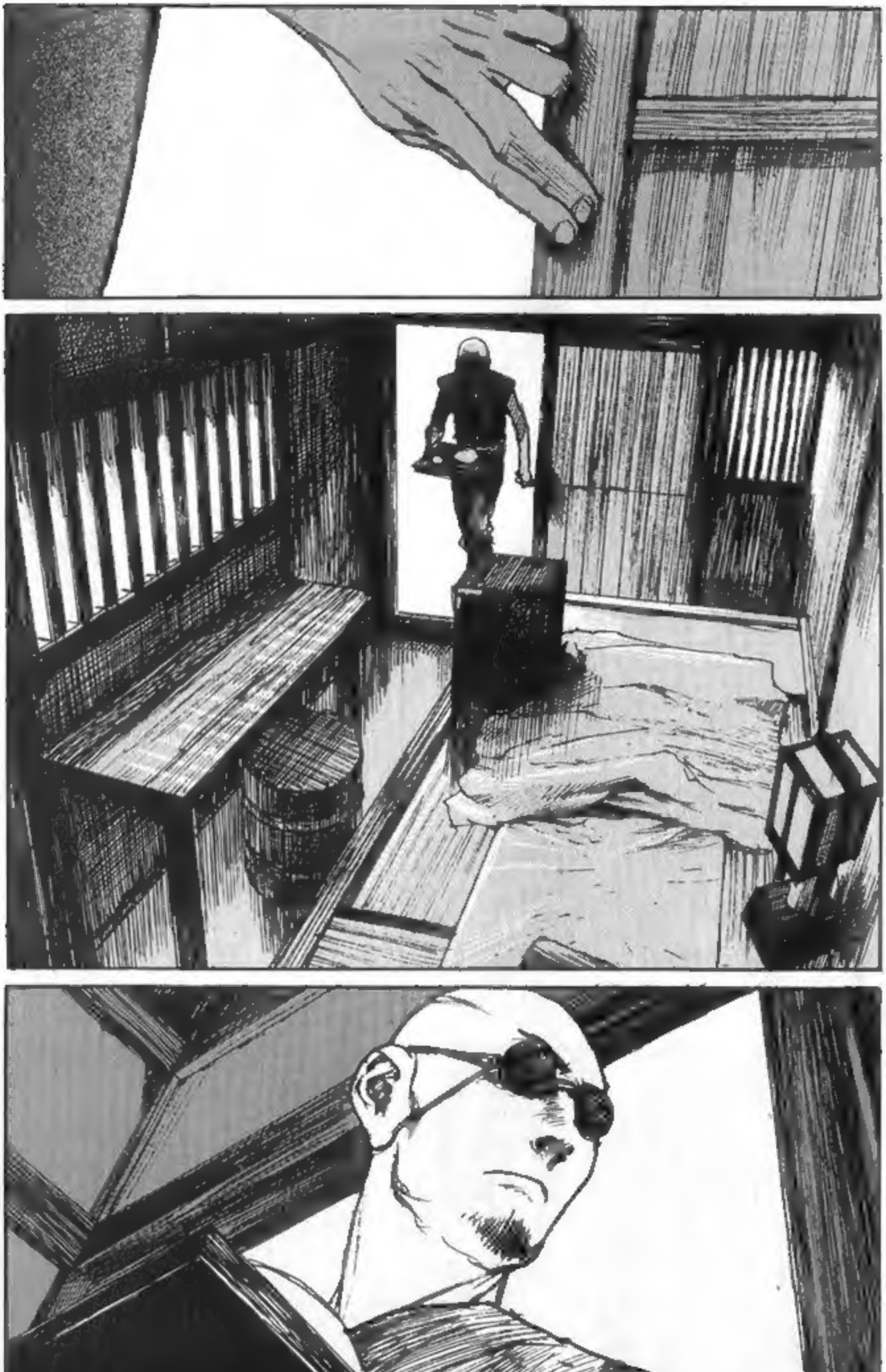
HUH!
BET I STUNK.
BLOOD AND SWEAT... AND... AND...
.....
.....
GIICHI...?
WHERE'S SHINRIJI?
.....
.....
DEAD.
I BURIED HIM BEHIND THE INARI SHRINE.

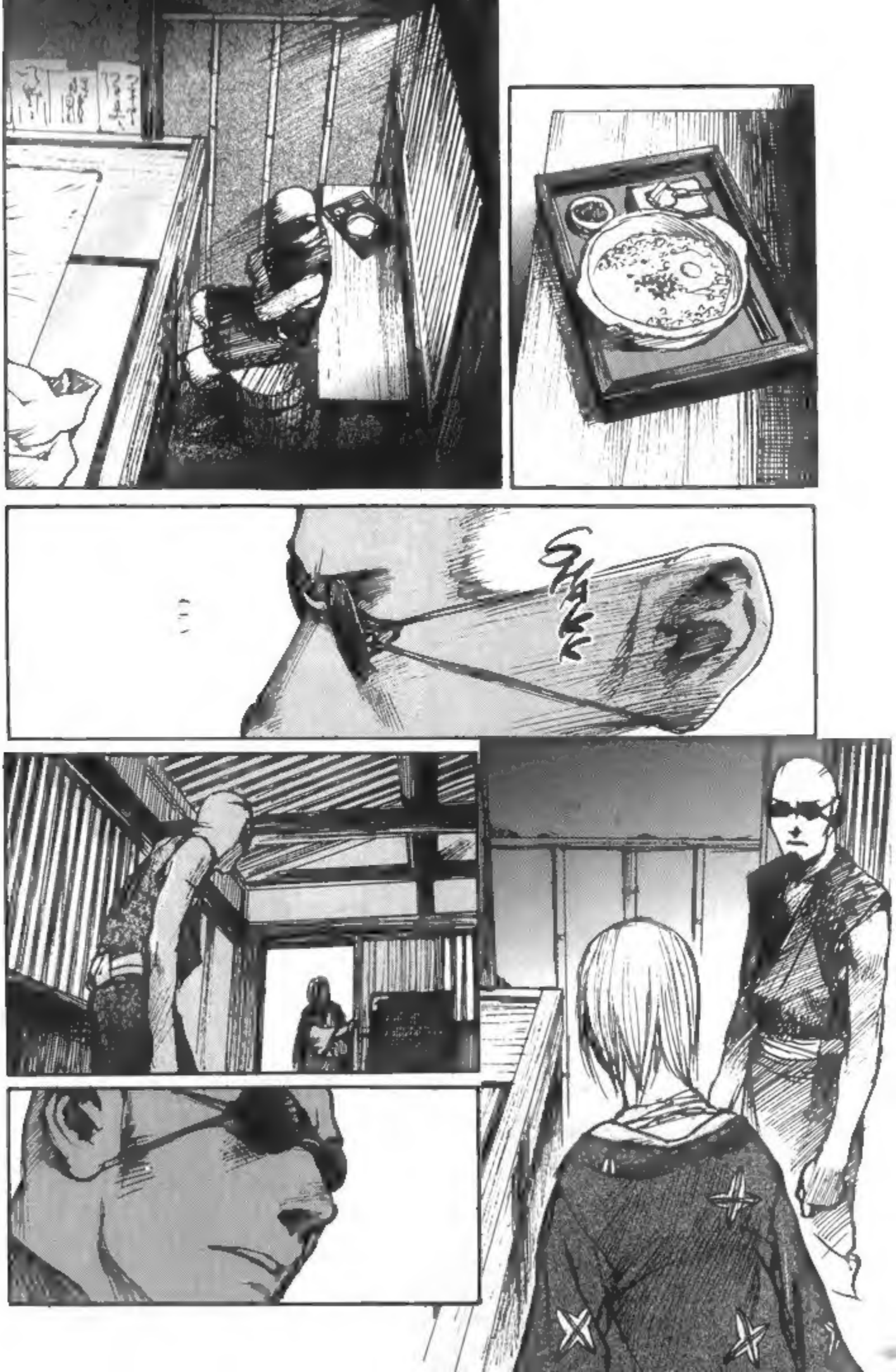
SOMEHOW, I...
...I HAD A FEELING.
GIICHI--
IT WAS A DISASTER.
AHH...
SO... HE DIED.
.....
.....

NO... I WOULDN'T CALL IT A DISASTER.
WE JUST GOT A LITTLE...
...CARE-LESS.
HA HA HA! THAT BASTARD SAID IT HIMSELF!
WE KILLED NINE IN TWO DAYS! NINE!!
AND ALL WE LOST WAS...
...WAS SHINRIJI. ONE LIFE AND... A BROKEN ARM.
NOT A BAD TRADE... WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

MUGAI-RYŪ HAD EIGHT, AND NOW WE'RE FOUR...
...INCLUDING THE BOSS.
I TOLD HIM ABOUT EVERYTHING. INCLUDING SHIRA.
OKAY. SO... WE CAN'T USE THE BATHHOUSE ANY MORE... WHERE DO WE GO NOW?
WE'LL GET INSTRUCTIONS.
RIGHT.
YOU JUST REST AND GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK.
GIICHI... THANK YOU.
.....
IT WAS NOTHING.

.....
.....
CHŌKICHI'S STILL IN THE SHOP.
UM...
.....
.....
I'M A LITTLE HUNGRY.
SHALL I HAVE HIM MAKE YOU SOME-THING...?
MAYBE SOME RICE GRUEL?
SURE... ANY-THING.
SORRY.
IT'S NOTHING.




SHAKE

OH, THAT LOOKS DELI-CIOUS!
MMM!
IT GOT COLD. SORRY.
BEASTS: END

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Rin and her immortal bodyguard, Manji, have become separated, Rin risking life and limb in her pursuit of her family's murderer, the ruthless Anotsu Kagehisa, leader of the outlaw Ittō-ryū sword school. Manji is slowly recovering – and reassembling – after being dismembered by Ittō-ryū thugs, and has set off to find Rin. Meanwhile, both friends and enemies are also assembling. Manji's ally, the beautiful assassin Hyakurin, has fallen into the hands of Ittō-ryū killers who will go to any length – and spare no agonies – to get her to talk. The name of the game is vengeance, but if Hyakurin's comrade Giichi can find her before she dies, the Ittō-ryū may get more of it than they bargained for!

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